

Pressklipp om Afghanistan



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Årgång 9



«Afghanistan»

PRESSKLIPP OM AFGHANISTAN

□ är ett samarbetsprojekt mellan Svenska Afghanistankommittén (SAK) och Afghanistankomiteen i Norge (AiN). □ utges varannan månad som en nyhetservice för SAKs och AiNs medlemmar, lokalkommittéer och styrelser. □ detta nummer är sammanställt och redigerat av Börje Almqvist och Peter Hjukström. □ pressklipp till kommande nummer mottas tacksamt från läsekretsen till adress: Svenska Afghanistankommittén, Sturegatan 16, 114 36 STOCKHOLM, SVERIGE (Märk kuvertet med "Pressklipp"). □ prenumerationens priset för 1997 är 250 kronor och inbetalas på pg 64 23 90-9, Svenska Afghanistankommittén. Notera på inbetalningskortet att betalningen avser prenumeration på "Pressklipp".

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Historien upprepar sig i Afghanistan

Paul Mohns bok en klassiker inom svensk reseskildring

PAUL MOHN:
Resa till Afghanistan

Svenska Afghanistankommittén

Kung Amanullahs korta regeringsperiod i Afghanistan 1919–29 kom att få avgörande betydelse för landets framtid. Det som skedde på 20-talet har påverkat hela 1900-talshistorien och erbjuder dessutom påfallande likheter med det dramatiska nutidsskeendet. För den som vill förstå den afghanska utvecklingen efter 1978 finns det därfor all anledning att intressera sig för Amanullahs strävanden och de konflikter de utlöste.

Efter att inledningsvis ha förklarat England krig och i fredsförhandlingarna lyckats utverka fullständig självständighet för Afghanistan, påbörjade han ett omfattande socialt och ekonomiskt moderniseringssprojekt.

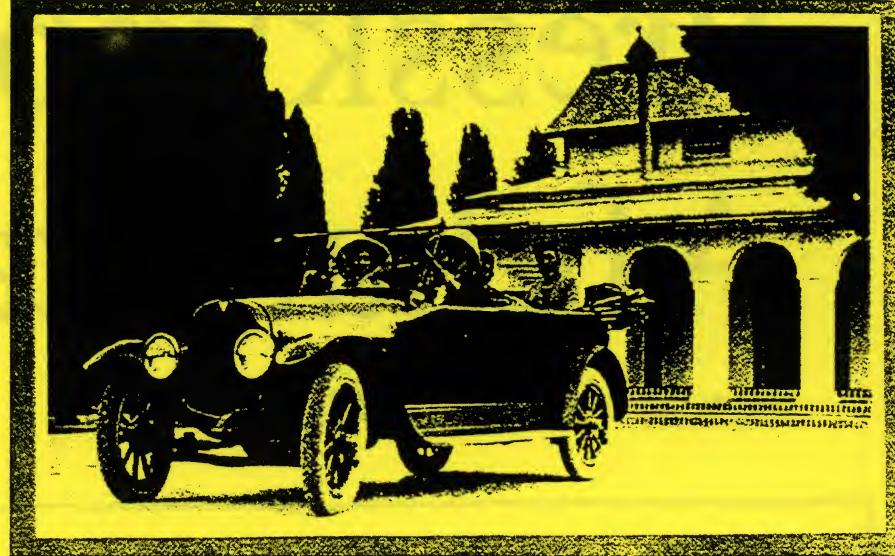
Modernisering och revolt

Landet fick sin första konstitution 1922, ett parlamentariskt system infördes, utbildningen sekulariseras, fabriker anlades, utländska experter inkallades, en ny huvudstad började byggas, vägar projekterades, järnvägar planerades o s v.

Men på en rad punkter hamnade kungen därvid på direkt konfrontationskurs med stamsamhällets regionala makthavare och den dominerande muslimska ideologin – de två samhällskrafter som dittills i en sorts triangulär balansakt med centralmakten garanterat nationens sköra stabilitet.

Redan 1924 utbröt begränsade revolter. Och 1928, efter Amanullahs återkomst från en bejublad rundresa i Europa, växte upporet på flera fronter, regeringstrupper tvingades retirera, inbördeskrig hotade. I januari 1929 abdikerade Amanullah; moderniseringssprojektet hade misslyckats, centralmakten hade förlorat.

I det vakuum som uppstod intogs Kabul av en tadjikisk folkledare som utropade sig till kung. Den pashtunska folkgruppen lyckades återta makten, men först efter ytterligare interna stamfejder inom den dominerande durrani-klanen kunde ”ord-



Afghanistan i slutet av 1920-talet, en revolutionerande tid då bilder som den här kunde tas. Ett av många privata fotografier från det afghanska kungahovet som publiceras i nytrycket av Paul Mohns reseskildring från 1930.

FOTO: PRINS ENAYAT KHAN

ningen” återställas. I och med kung Zahir Shahs tillträde 1933 inträdde en ny period av jämvikt, som skulle brytas först vid 70-talets slut.

Amanullahs namn tabu

I sin bok *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan* från 1973, det stora (och enda) standardverket om Amanullahs misslyckade försök att modernisera det afghanska stamsamhället, beklagar sig Leon B Poullada, amerikansk diplomat och statsvetare, över den bristfälliga litteraturen i ämnet. Dels finns mycket lite källmaterial bevarat i Afghanistan. (Efter Amanullahs fall var hans namn tabu och dokumenten från hans regeringstid ansågs värdelösa. Poullada tvingas bygga mycket av sin studie på muntliga informationer och brittiskt underrättelsematerial.) Dels finns så gott som inga litterära beskrivningar av den här perioden, och de som existerar är andrahandsreferat.

Men faktum är att det finns inte mindre än två svenska böcker som var och en på sitt sätt vore värdar hedersplatser i Poullandads literaturlista. Det är *Aurora Nilssons Flykten från harem* 1928, en självbiografisk skildring av en kvinna som var gift med en afghan och bodde i Kabul 1926–28. (Jag har skildrat hennes liv i min roman *Gryningsflickan* 1986.) Och det är Paul Mohns *Resa till Afghanistan* från 1930.

Mohns bok är en klassiker bland svenska reseskildringar. Den hör dessutom till det bästa som skrivits om Afghanistan också sett i ett internationellt perspektiv. Den har länge varit så gott som omöjlig att uppbringa antikvariskt, och biblioteken har i vanlig ordning rensat ut den tillsammans med andra ”föråldrade” reseskildringar.

När den nu ges ut på nytt är det en stor litterär händelse, som dock löper uppenbara risker att gå den icke Afghanistan-intresserade allmänheten förbi. Det är Svenska Afghanistankommittén som svarar för

nyutgåvan. En print on demand-upplaga där texten scannats in från originalen och bildmaterialet utökats med unika fotografier från det afghanska hovet vid sekelskiften. (Tyvärr har dock den utmärkta kartan från 1930 uteslutits.)

Gunnar Jarring, som själv var i Afghanistan några år efter Mohn, skriver i sitt förord till boken att det är ”ofattligt att den inte blivit översatt till de stora europeiska kulturspråken”. Ja, den hade kunnat få stor betydelse inte bara för omvärldens bild av Afghanistan utan också för afghanerna själva.

Lysande berättare

Mohn anländer till Afghanistan en het sommardag 1928 efter en lång tågresa genom Sovjetunionen. ”Mitt bagage omfattade två unicahandväskor om 40 kilo, där frack, smoking, lackskor och andra nyttiga föremål av samma slag togo en försvarlig plats”, skriver han. Han fick sannolikt ingen användning för dessa persedlar.

Han färdas söderut till häst, övernattar i karavanserajer, tar sig över bergspassen i Hindukush och når så småningom Kabul. Runt omkring honom jäser missnöjet med Amanullahs reformer. I öster har shinvari-stammarna rest sig. Från norr närmar sig ”rövarhövdingen” Bachha Saqqaos styrkor. Kungens fall är en tidsfråga.

Mohn är en lysande berättare, medryckande, insiktsfull, uppmärksam på allt, med blick för landskapets egenart liksom för det mänskliga vardagslivets detaljer. Han är väl insatt i historien och samtidsskeendet, inklusive de etniska gruppernas och stammarnas sociala struktur.

Allra bäst är han kanske när han återger sina egna resesträpatser på en stilfull prosa som, med Fredrik Bööks ord i Svenska Dagbladet, ”livas av en torr men verkningsfull humor”. Jan Myrdal kallar honom i sin egen Afghanistan-bok för ”läsvärd”, ett högt betyg för att komma från

den katedern.

Man kan beklaga att Mohn inte lärt sin litterära begåvning blomma ut i fler resesöcker: *Resa till Afghanistan* är hans enda försökt i genren. Efter hans död 1957 utgavs memoarboken *Krumelurer i tiden marginal* och han skrev bland annat också i en *Handledning i utrikespolitik*, men hans liv och arbete i diplomatins och politikens tjänst hade utan tvivel kunnat ge stort till mycket.

Född 1898 som son till pastorn i franska reformerta församlingen i Stockholm utbildades han utomlands och i Uppsala, och han arbetade som turkisk tolk innan han påbörjade en slingrande diplomatisk karriär som via ambassaderna i Paris och Rom bland annat ledde till insatser i internationellt hjälparbete, anställning som rådgivare åt amerikanska regeringen, uppdrag i FN:s Palestinkommitté och i övervakningskommisionen i Korea. På 50-talet blev han känd som skapare av "Mohnplanen", en strategi för u-landsbistånd som dock aldrig realiseras. Han var, skriver Jarring, en "löshäst" i den svenska utrikesjärnstenen.

Vittne till reformarbetet

Han kom alltså till Afghanistan i en betydelsefull brytningstid. Han blev åsyna vittne till Amanullahs reformarbete och berättar utförligt om den nya konstitutionen, om utbildningsreformer och byråkratiska nyordningar, om tullar och skatter och europeiska handelsförbindelser, om fabrikspolitik och järnvägsförbindelser, om påbuds gällande ämbetsmännens klädsel och kvinnornas slöjer. Bitvis är han renat mer välvunderrättad än Poullada. vars förteckning över Amanullahs reformer uppträder nio boksidor.

Bland annat redovisar han imponerande siffror från undervisningsministeriet: "Icke mindre än 322 folkskolor och 22 högre läroanstalter hade grundats under fyra år jämfört med ett gymnasium, ett franskt lycéum och en tysk realskola. Dessutom en polisskola, en musikskola och en värvskola. Skolbarnens antal hade på tre år stigit från 19.000 till 51.000 i folkskolorna och till 4.600 på det högre studiet. Till utlandet skickades 151 elever för fullbordandet av sina studier. Vidare utbildades 630 lärare för folkskolorna och 100 för fortsättningsskolor..."

Han kan också ge unika referat från Amanullahs föreläsning i oktober 1928,

kungens närmast patetiska ansträngningar att in i det sista, med upporet knackande på dörren, som en folkbildare klädd "citydress", eller som den landsfader han inte var, försöka lära folket att förstå sitt eget bästa. "När konungen började redogöra för sitt digra reformprogram stod hovministern på fotstegen till talarstolen med en väldig läderportfölj, ur vars rymliga innandömen han fiskade upp det ena papperet efter det andra..."

Stort uppseende väckte det, när drottningen på sin gemals uppmaning avtog slöjan och för första gången "prisgav sitt vackra ansikte åt sina häpna undersåtars blickar". (Också Poullada nämner Amanullahs föreläsning. I brist på andra källor tvingas han därvid stödja sig på två telegram från brittiska ambassaden i Kabul till UD i London och en anteckning från brittiska underrättelsejärnsten i Indien.)

Men Mohn kunde också iakta reaktionerna på kungens enmansrevolution. Som en kall vindl erfor han det växande missnöjet från religiösa och andra krafter, inte minst muslimska mullahs och statliga tjänstemän som såg sina personliga positioner hotas.

Bestickande paralleller

Det som gör Mohns beskrivning – och över huvud taget studien av Amanullah-perioden – intressant i dag är som jag inledningsvis antyddde de bestickande parallellerna mellan händelseutvecklingen på 20-talet och skeendet i Afghanistan femtio år senare: Kommunisternas statskupp 1978. Taraki-regimens reformer (egentligen inledda redan under Daoud några år tidigare), missnöjesrevolutionerna, det muslimska motståndet, stammarnas uppror, nationens kollaps.

Likheterna upphör naturligtvis i och med den sovjetiska interventionen (ingen



Kung Amanullah och drottning Sureya, som på sin gemals uppmaning avtog slöjan och för första gången "prisgav sitt vackra ansikte åt sina häpna undersåtars blickar". Något Paul Mohn bevitnade.

kom till Amanullahs undsättning), men i motståndet mot ryssarna och deras ideo logi stärks stammarnas och religiöns position, centralmakten (upp rätthållene av okupationsmakten) vittrar sönder, och i

samma ögonblick som ryssarna retirerar är vi tillbaka i det vakuum som uppstod 1929, då först en tadjikisk upprorsledare grep makten i Kabul (jämför Massoud) och sedan pashtunerna återtog den (jämför taliberna).

Nu ska man inte föra den här sortens resonemang för långt. Jämförelserna halter dessutom här och var. Och historien upp repar sig som bekant aldrig. Men just efter som Amanullah misslyckades med att förändra de grundläggande förutsättningarna kunde "samma" drama spelas upp en gång till, den här gången dessutom med utländsk inblandning och moderna vapen, vilket gitvis förvärvade konflikten.

Borde förankrat sina idéer

Mohn och Poullada är påfallande ene om en rad slutsatser. Amanullah var för naïv, för otalig och i synnerhet för svag. Han saknade politisk insikt, han gjorde felaktiga prioriteringar och fördömdade missförståndet. Han överskattade sin egen förmåga och medborgarnas mognad samtidigt som han underrättade stammarnas regionala slagkraft och de muslimska ledarnas inflytande.

Han borde ha förstärkt armén, förankrat sina idéer i en bred folklig bas (eller i varje fall i någon sorts bas) och först därefter inlett reformarbetet. Det säger sig själv att man inte förvandlar ett medeltida samhälle genom att stifta lagar om att männen ska bärta kostym, styrkrage och hatt. I synnerhet inte i Afghanistan.

Hur som helst kan man inte göra revolution uppifrån. Som Mohn formulerar det: "Det är omöjligt att göra ett folk lyckligt med dess vilja." Det finns inga genvägar till framtiden, det har afghanerna fått erfara värre än kanske något annat folk i vår tid.

Tomas Löfström



utblick

Kriget i Afghanistan är över sedan åtta år sedan, men det har inte slutat tillakas. Målet är inte slutt på lidanden. I krigets spår ligger förträdiska minor utspridda över stora områden.

Många lär sig var det är säkert att röra sig, men när som helst, var sätet kan olyckan slå till. Exakt var minorna spritts ut kan ingen säga med säkerhet.

De återanvänts och säljs i basarer, så minskar kan man göra med att röra sig. Det är Ann-Mari Thorsén som 1986 till 1990 arbetade på två resor i Pakistan strax utanför Afghanistan, då kriget pågick i grannlandet. Cirka 25 procent av de skador som behövdes i dessa sjuhus var minskador.

En kvinna kan förlora ett ben när hon bär vatten till sitt hem. Barn hittar några polis leksaker formade som vingar, men plötsligt exploderar leksaken som i själva verket var en fjärrbom, rakt i anslaget på dem.

Minskador står för fyra av fem amputeringar i Afghanistan.

I indiska staten Jammu och Kaschmir i sydvästra Indien är minskador en stor del i den egna krigsvärdet. I indiska staten Jammu och Kaschmir i sydvästra Indien är minskador en stor del i den egna krigsvärdet.

Enligt Paavo Lipponen kommer det att in tretton års tidsförbund mot landen att inte bli totalt. Det möste bli möjligt att göra undantag. (TT)

Vare är dödars eller lemästas 26 000 mäniskor av personminor. Långt efter att krig avslutats ligger de kvar som hinder för jordbruk och handel. På måndag startar en tre veckor lång konferens om personminor i Oslo. Över 100 länder deltar. Målet för konferensen är ett totalförbud mot personminor. Redan pågår en debatt om hur detta ska genomföras.

Den vanliga bilden av minskador är att bilden är sprängt bort, men det är inte särnigt att även underlivet är bort. Det är en annan män. Minor leder osäkert till många synskador och blindhet, berättar Ann-Mari Thorsén.

I mer än 60 länder finns sjuhus minör kvar. De flesta finns i tre världen. De flesta är värst drabbade i länderna av Afghanistan, Angola, irakiska Kurdistan, norra Somalia och Cambodja. I många av dessa länder råder krig på livsviktigt vatten. Mineringen av befolkningssystem gör livsvisstuationen ytterligare komplicerad.

Det är naturligtvis stora mänskliga förluster och personliga förluster och per-

sonliga tragedier, men mineringen får också betydelse i ett vittnesperspektiv. Minnesbokslutet är det svart för länderna i tredje världen att bygga upp en hållbar ekonomi och handel. Vagar är minrade långt efter kriget statut och försvarar en återuppgång av handelsförbindelser. Ett ex-

empel är inte säljas på samma sätt som tidigare.

Äteranvändning

Det var efter Sovjetunionens invasion 1979 som Afghanistan minnerades, inte bara av sovjetiska styrkor utan sedermera av världens trupper för att hindra de egna soldaterna från att desertera. Efter kriget har motståndsrörelsen grävt ned stridsvagnsmenor.

Det rör sig med andra ord om både artilleri och stridsvagnsmenor som anti-personella minör och stridsvagnsmenor som rörelser som minörerna orsakat. I samband med de sista stridsvagnsmenor som kräver amputations. De läggs ut manuellt eller sprids av artilleri över större områden och med flyg från luften. Det är dessutom

är de mest förträdiska förändringar eftersom ett ganska lång tröskel för spridning som skadar dem som trampar på minan eller splitter som sprids till fler personer i närområdet.

Stöd för minförförd

Det är personminor som står i centrum i konferensen i Oslo där 100 länder kommer att delta. Redan förra hösten inleddes Ottawa-prosessens första initiativ av Kanadas försvarsminister, Paul Martin. Årtalet som förförd i nationer som var för ett totalförbud mot personminor till ett mottot. Målet är att i december i år underlämna en konvention om ett totalförbud.

I dag har redan 107 länder givit sitt stöd till Ottawa-processen, men ännu finns ett 30-tal länder som är emot ett totalförbud, exempelvis Frankrike, Grekland, Kina, Pakistan, Indien och Pakistan, Finland vil har ett undantag på grund av att landet ligger nära Ryssland och med flyg från luften. Det är dessutom

”Han satte sig ned vid källan med kanvaskästen i knät. Minan chockade honom. De hade lagt sprängämnet där och sedan smetet vätet över den för att dölja dess mekanism och vilken styrka den hade. Det fanns ett nätet träd cirka fyra meter bort. Ånnu ett träd cirka tio meter bort. Två månaders gräs hade vuxit över betongklumpen.”

Ur Den engelske patienten av Michael Ondatje

empel i Afghanistan är handelsvägen från provinsen Ghazni till Pakistan som före kriget tog tio timmar. I dag tar samma resa flera dagar med följd att jordbruksprodukter



Bild: JASON REED/REUTERS

Afghanska minskadade ser på när en kamrat går på sin protes med hjälp av kryckor på Internationella Röda korsets ortopediska centrum i Mazar-i-Sharif i norra Afghanistan. Mer än 5 000 knäskolot, 90 procent under 20 år, har behandlats och fått proteser här sedan 1991.

civila långt efter krigets slut



Aven dessa länder kommer dock att delta i Oslokonferensen som observatörer USA har tidigare sagt nej till totalförbud, men ansätts sig den 18 augusti till att delta.

Sverige införde i december förrå året ett förbud mot landminor, även förvarsledningen och OB Owe Wiktorin hände att minor behövdes för att forsvara det vidstrakte Sverige.

– Jag troj säkert att svenska arméns kan handskas med minor, men med tanke på de svårigheter som finns att kontrollera försäljningen kommer minor att fortsätta skada civila mäniskor under lång tid, säger Ann-Mari Thorén. Det är dock hoppas att mötekonferensen ska leda fram till ett totalförbud mot produktion, försäljning och användande av personminör.

Drive av afghaner

Kunskruou gäller framtiden, men det finns också projekt som handlar om att röja minor och rehabilitera minskadade. Det är en del av minskadens FN:s mest omfattande arbete i Afghanistan.

FN bidrar med resurser, utbildning och teknisk rådgivning. Själv minröjningen utövs av afghaner, personad 2 500 personer, som arbetar med livet som insats. Med medtäckedektorer som de sveper framför sig undersöker de marken centimeter för centimeter. När detektoron gör utslag måste de söka för hand och försiktigt känna efter med en kniv i marken. Mekaniskt

minröjning är dyrbart och gör ofta marken obrukbar för odling efteråt.

För att undvika att mäniskor skadas av minor har också försök gjorts med hästar. Det handlar om att lämna afghaniska bönder, sköldar och kvinnor huvud skada uppåtta minor och undvika faror, men också rapportera fynd av minor så att de kan rivas upp.

För dem som röder drabbats bedriver bland andra Svenska Afghanistankommit- tén och Internationella Röda Korset handikapprehabilitering i Afghanistan. Prinsipen är att röda svenska eldsjälarna och landstads personal. Hjälpet ska själva verksamheten drivas av afghaner.

– Vi ser oss själva som tillfälliga gäster. Afghanerna ska lösa sina problem själva, men vi ställer resurser till förfogande, förklarar Afghanistans

Bild: JASON REED/REUTERS

finns i dag en rad mindre protesverkstäder i landet.

Förut den biståndshjälp som finns får befolkningen läta till sin egen kapacitet och sunt utveckling.

– De resurser som finns är mänskliga resurser, förklarar Ann-Mari Thorén och berättar om familiemedlemmars fantastiska förmåga att ta hand om varandra.

Det fanns alltid dubbelt så många personer som arbetar i studierna. Det är enkelt att under eller bredvid sängarna och lagade mat till patienterna.

Svenska Afghanistan-kommitéen

1980, kort efter att sovjetiska invasionen av Afghanistan, startades SAK. Syftet var att stödja det afghaniska folkköts kamp för nationell enhet och genomsättande av demokrati och att ge dem tillstånd att röja marken i landet humanitär hjälp.

I dag har SAK en årsbudget om 50 till 65 miljoner kronor, där den största delen utgörs av medel från SIDA, EU och FN. Detta med sex till sju procent utgörs av bidrag från privatpersoner. SAK har idag tre stora regionkontor i Afghanistan och driver tre handikapprehabiliteringsverkstäder. Dessutom stöder SAK flickors rätt till utbildning genom att de bidrar till läroverk för flickor i Afghanistan.

– Här i landet har

utblick

ingela Rutberg

kommitténs förbundssekretär Peter Hjukström.

dra minskadade ges sjukgymnasttränning.

Röden Ann-Mari Thorén arbetade med minskadade fanns enkla protesverkstäder där inhemska personal tillverkar proteser av material som finns i landet. På samma sätt



Bild: PATRICK DENORMONT/REUTERS

Minröjare täcker över minor, raketor och bomber innan de ska förstöras utanför Kabul den 26 oktober förrå året som ett led i det minröjningsprojekt som Afghan Technical Consultant driver. Gruppen har förstört cirka 50 000 bomber och minor sedan 1995.



Bild: PATRICK DENORMONT/REUTERS

Sedan minröjningsgruppen täckt över minor, raketor och bomber förstörs alltihop i en explosion utanför Kabul.

Oslo-möte om personminör

På måndag i nästa vecka inleds förhandlingarna om ett förbud mot personminör i Oslo.

Ölka personminör

Trampminor
Gömda under marken och löser ut när man trampar på dem.

Splitterminor
Splitterar över marken och löser ut med snabbtillrad
Orsakar splitter- skador.

Riktade splitterminör
Första ledningen slungar upp minan i luften, där den exploderar.

Typskador av personminör

1. Sprängskada på nedre delen av kroppen.
Oftast amputations- skada.

2. Splitter- skada på över- kroppen, armar och huvudet.

3. Skador på händer och fötter, särskilt efter lek med minor.

Då skadas personer?

Afghanistan 1993

Desarmering 4%

Lek med minor 8%

Inget svar 2%

Jordbruksarbete/ hämta vatten 20%

På resa 15%

Andra icke-militära aktiviteter 38%

Typskada 1 Spräng- skada 30%

Typskada 2 Splitter- skada 50%

Typskada 3 Skada vid hand- hanvände 5%

Går ej att bestämma 15%

Översta grafen är från SIDA

Källa: Internationella Röda korsets kommitté.

Fortsatt dödligt spel

SVD 14/8-97

För bara några få månader sedan såg den strängt islamitiska regimen i Kabul närmast oövervinnelig ut. Talibanerna, som erövrade huvudstaden Kabul i september förra året, hade överraskande snabbt tagit kontroll över största delen av landet.

Wall Street Journal antydde därför i slutet av maj att det klassiska "stora spelet" om Afghanistan - i vilket regionala stormakter som Ryssland, Iran och Pakistan aktivt deltar genom att stödja olika aghanska grupperingar - nu närmade sig sitt slut. Oppositionsstyrkorna i den norra delen av landet framstod nämligen som chanslösa mot de gudomligt inspirerade talibanerna. "Oavsett vad man tycker om dem, så är talibanerna de spelare som är mest kapabla att etablera fred i Afghanistan i detta ögonblick i landets historia", skrev tidningen.

Afghanistan har inte varit under ett enat styre sedan den kommunistiska kuppen 1978. I snart 20 år har landet härjats av krig med Sovjetunionen och inbördeskrig. Det är sålunda begripligt att många hoppades att talibanerna - hur otrevlig deras teokratiska statsdoktrin än är - åtminstone skulle etablera fred. Det hade kunnat sätta stopp för de lidanden som på grund av kriget drabbar befolkningen.

Talibanoffensiv norr om Kabul

Islamabad: Talibanregimen satte i går igång en omfattande offensiv norr om huvudstaden Kabul mot oppositionsstyrkor under ledning av Ahmed Shah Massoud, rapporterade nyhetsbyrån AIP.

Det fanns ingen oberoende bekräftelse på AIP:s rapport som citerade talibanska tjänstemän. Talibanerna hävdade att de vann mark, men andra källor uppgav att staden Guldara fortfarande var i Massouds händer. TT-AFP SVD 31/8-97

FN försöker återföra 150 000 flyktingar till Afghanistan

Kabul: FN:s flyktingorgan UNHCR har påbörjat ett program för att återföra 150 000 aghanska flyktingar från Pakistan. Det uppgav en FN-tjänsteman på lördagen. 26 000 familjer omfattades av programmet och de flesta härstammade från byar i Azrow och Tehzeen i östra Afghanistan.

FN:s ansträngningar att få flyktingarna att återvända till Pakistan har hittills inte varit framgångsrika. Målet var att 350 000 flyktingar skulle återvända under 1997, men under de första sex månaderna beräknas endast 35 000 ha följt uppmaningen från UNHCR. Inbördeskrig pågår fortfarande i flera delar av Afghanistan och avskräcker många flyktingar från att återvända. TT-REUTER SVD 31/8-97

Ryska gränsstyrkor dödade nio människor som illegalt försökte korsa gränsen mellan Afghanistan och Tadzjikistan natten till måndagen, meddelade gränsstyrkornas presskontor i Dusjanbe. TT-AFP SVD 16/9-97

Förhoppningarna om fred var kanske aldrig helt realistiska. Nu framstår de som krossade. *The Times* rapporterade i går att den nordliga alliansen, ledd av general Ahmad Shah Massoud, nu förbereder vad man hoppas blir den slutliga attacken mot Kabul. Samtidigt står det alltmer klart att talibanerna misslyckats med att vinna folkets hjärtan.

Kampen om makten i Kabul kommer därför att intensifieras under de kommande veckorna. Det dödliga spelet om Afghanistan är långtfrån slut.

Afghanistan blir emirat

Kabul: Afghanistans islamistregim har ändrat landets beteckning från Islamisk stat till Islamiskt emirat. Det innebär att landet ska styras av en muslimsk härsare likt schejkdomen i Persiska viken, sade tjänstemän på måndagen. Statsformsbeteckningen ändras på order av talibanernas högste ledare mulla Mohammad Omar, också känd i militskretsar som Amir-ul Momineen (de trognas ledare). TT-AFP

Talibánér återtog nyckelområden

AFGHANISTAN. Talibanska styrkor återtog i onsdags kväll några nyckelområden i Kunar, nordväst om staden Jalalabad i Afghanistan. 50 mäniskor hade dödats under två dagars strider i området. Det uppgav på torsdagen den Pakistan-baserade och talibanerna närmäende nyhetsbyrån AIP.

Enligt talibanernas talesman hade oppositionens anfall mot Kunar slagits tillbaka och många av dess soldater dödats.

De islamiska talibanerna intog huvudstaden Kabul för elva månader sedan och kontrollerar två tredjedelar av landet. Under oppositionens offensiv har de under de senaste månaderna förlorat delar av sitt område i närheten av Kabul. DN TT-Reuter

Talibanerna talar om förhandlingar

AFGHANISTAN. De religiösa talibanstyrkorna och oppositionen utkämpade på fredagen hårdare strider i ett strategiskt område i östra Afghanistan vid gränsen mot Pakistan.

Men på fredagen förde talibanstyrkorna ledare också för första gången fram möjligheten av förhandlingar med motståndaralliansen. Det gjordes i en utsändning från talibanstyrkornas Radio Shariat på fredagskvällen, i vilken ledarna erbjöd förhandlingar med två av de tre oppositionsfaktionerna.

Det är första gången de lättat på sin hårda och oförsonliga hållning. Tidigare har talibanerna vägrat att överhuvud förhandla med oppositionen om inte de tusentals krigsfångar som hålls av den uzbekiske krigsherren Malik Pahlawans styrkor först friges. DN 30/8 AP

Talibaner till skarp attack

KABUL. Hårda strider utbröt på tisdagen norr om Afghanistans huvudstad Kabul då talibanerna inledde en omfattande attack. Syftet var att driva bort oppositionsstyrkor från ett strategiskt område, uppgav soldater och andra som bevänt området.

Talibanerna satte in artilleri, stridsvagnar och flyg i striderna, sade talibansoldaten Gul Niaz.

Enligt Niaz dog flera talibener i striderna, oklart hur många. TT-AFP

Hårda strider i Afghanistan

KABUL. Hårda strider rasade i staden Mazar-i-Sharif i norra Afghanistan som är oppositionsstyrkornas högkvarter då talibanstyrkorna avancerade in mot staden med hjälp av lokalbefolkningen. Det uppgav oberoende källor på onsdagen.

Hjälparbetare som är stationerade i staden sade att häftiga strider rasade i de södra och östra delarna av staden. De uppgav att talibanstyrkorna fick hjälp av lokala befälhavare från milisen Hezb-i-Islami, som är pash-tuner, samma folk som utgör majoriteten av talibanerna.

Enligt obekräftade uppgifter ska ett antal hjälparbetare ha dödats i striderna.

Fordon tillhörande brittiska, tyska och schweiziska hjälpororganisationer hade stulits och det lokala FN-kontoret och hade plundrats, sade en hjälparbetare. Alla FN- och Röda kors-flygningar ställdes in under dagen, vilket omöjliggjorde en evakuering av hjälppersonal.

Talibanregimen kontrollerar två tredjedelar av Afghanistan. Mazar-i-Sharif är den sista större staden som fortfarande kontrolleras av oppositionsstyrkorna. TT-AFP

Sköndle Nyh. 11/9 - 97

Sidney – en skånsk hjälte

En barnens vän i nöden och en kollegas frälsare från bödlarna

Arbete 6/10-97

PESHAWAR

– Jag ger aldrig upp, så enkelt är det...

Sidney Pettersson, 58, resebyråmannen från Malmö som blev hjälparbetare i det eviga krigets Afghanistan, har gjort det igen.

I våras räddade han lemlästade barn och kvinnor ut ur en byggnad i Jalalabad som sprängts i ett bombattentat.

Fyrtio mäniskor dog men offren kunde varit fler utan skåningens insats.

Den här gången har han räddat sin arbetskamrat på Svenska Afghanistan-kommitténs (SAC) kontor i Kabul, Abdul Qabir, 35, undan bödelns rep.

Qabir, som tillhör den nu förföljda tadjska minoriteten, kidnappades av talibanaerna från sitt kontor och anklagades för spioneri och högfrörräderi mot den islamiska staten samt ospecificerade "vapenaffärer".

Kidnappades

Dramat inleddes en tidig sommarmorgon.

Sidney Pettersson berättar:

– Jag var på kontoret på andra våningen nära en av våra vakter rusade in och sa att Qabir höll på att kidnappas. Jag sprang ned, men kom för sent. Bilen gjorde en rivstart så gruset yrde. Efter som gatan är full av häl så sprang jag efter och ropade åt dem att stanna. Men jag hann aldrig i kapp.

– Våra afganska vakter hade strikta order om att inte släppa in några talibana på kontoret. Därfor hade taxiföraren sagt till dem att han hade ett viktigt personligt meddelande till Qabir. Så fort han kom ut rusade två gorillor ut ur baksätet och släpade in honom i bilen.

– Jag åkte inrikesministeriet och fick snabbt företräde hos en person jag träffat tidigare.

Han försäkrade att säkerhetsjänsten inte griper någon på det sättet och sa att det säkert var en privat uppforelse.

– Aldrig, sa jag och krävde besked med en gång.

Tre timmar senare kom det: Qabir var häktad för spioneri.

– Han uppbenbar planterats i en organisation och utnyttjat sin ställning för att hålla kontakt



Sidney Pettersson är Skånevägen som räddat kvinnor och barn ur terrorns grepp. Och nu även hjälpt en kollega undan talibanaernas arkebuseringspatruller.

med Massoud (befälhavare för den anti-talibanska alliansens styrkor) och förmeldat vapen till våra fiender, sa den ansvarige. Själv varnades jag.

– Vi har anledning att tro att ni är chef för en spioncentral, sa han.

– Samma anklagelse riktades mot franska hjälppolitikerna Avicen och våra kontor utsattes för en brysk husundersökning.

Nervös väntan

– Eftersom vår hyresvård lagrat sina saker i källarutrymmet så var det några oroliga timmar. Alla i Afghanistan har ju skaffat vapen under snart 20 år av krig och konflikter och om de hittat en Kalashnikov eller några patroner så skulle det ju lastas på mig...

– Varje dag besökte jag olika ministerier men fick bara undvika kande svar.

– Samtidigt visste jag att inte ens ministerns jag talade med visste vad som skulle ske med Qabir. Dom var bara skrivbordstalibanaer och besluten fattades

av de verkliga men osynliga ledarna i Kandahar, 450 km sydväst om Kabul.

– Tiden var knapp: Om talibanaerna förde Qadir till Kandahar så skulle han kanske försvinna för alltid...

– Tio dagar efter gripandet satte jag efter konsultationer med SAC:s ledning i Peshawar hårt mot härt och gav talibanaerna ett ultimatum.

– Om inte Qabir friges inom 48 timmar så kommer allt svenska bistånd till Afghanistan att dras in, sa jag.

Bevakades

– Samma eftermiddag fick jag besked att följa med en av inrikesministeriets aniktslösa chefer på en "utflykt".

– Jag tog till ett industriområde utanför Kabul där den svarta tänjstabilen stannade utanför ett företag som sålde begagnade reservdelar till bilar. En elegant herr tog emot på kontoret och läste upp ur en rapport exakt vad jag gjort timme för timme sedan gripandet av Qadir.

– Vi har ögonen på er men om ni gör som jag säger så kan problemen lösas snart, sa han.

– Kvällen därpå kom en talibana till grinden och sa att Qadir skulle friges nästa morgon och det skedde. I gryningen dumpades han framför kontoret.

Han hade ingen aning om var han hållits fängslad.

– Han hade hotats med galgen och suttu i långa föhrör men släppt tortyr.

Sidney Pettersson är helt övertygad om Qadirs oskuld, men varför greps han?

– Troligen för att han har god utbildning och är starkt kritisk till talibanaerna.

Tusentals tadjiker har gripits i Kabul de senaste månaderna. Många har frigjorts efter några dagar, andra kvarhålls uppenbart för utväxling av krigsfångar. Men Qadir betraktades som spion och skulle inte slippa undan så här om det inte vore för en principstark skåning.

BO GUNNARSSON,
text och foto

Ökad opiumproduktion slår mot Europa

17/9-93

GENEVE, SVD

► Afghanistans opiumproduktion har ökat med 25 procent under talibaneernas styre, och FN varnar nu för kraftigt inföde av heroin i Europa med sjunkande priser som följd.

FN:s narkotikaprogram UNDCP har just presenterat en ny studie om opiumproduktionen i Afghanistan. Efter besök i 18 provinser fann man att produktionen ökat med 25 procent under 1996 till 2 800 ton. Det innebär att Afghanistan passerat Myanmar som världens största producent av råvaran som omvandlas till he-

roin. Hälften av världens heroin har nu sitt ursprung i Afghanistan, enligt studien.

Löfte från talibaneerna

När de muslimska fundamentalisterna, talibaneerna, tog makten i Afghanistan i september förra året lovade de att hejda opiumproduktionen i landet. Men utvecklingen har gått åt motsatt håll. Odlings-teknikerna har förbättrats och produktionen koncentreras till högt liggande områden med gynnsammare klimat, enligt studien.

– Det är en mycket oroande

utveckling. Heroinet kommer att flöda in i Europa, och redan nästa år kommer prisfallet som kan följas av ökad efterfrågan. Omkring 80 procent av allt heroin som konsumeras i Europa kommer från Afghanistan, säger Pino Arlacchi, nytillträdd chef för UNDCP till Svd.

FN startar program

Arlacchi förklarar att "kampen mot opiumodlingen i Afghanistan nu får nu högsta prioriteten". I november startar FN ett program i Afghanistan där bönder får hjälp med alternativ odling. Programmet kom-

mer att kosta nära 130 miljoner kronor under fyra år.

Nöjda med odlingen

– Problemet är att bönderna är mycket nöjda med opiumodlingen. Och talibaneerna är i desperat behov av inkomsterna. Det är svårt att övertala dem att ändra sina odlingsrutiner, säger Arlacchi.

Afghanistan är ett av sex länder som kritiseras för att inte samarbeta tillräckligt för att stoppa handeln med droger. De övriga är Colombia, Iran, Myanmar, Nigeria och Syrien. Men Afghanistan är också ett

mycket fattigt och förstört land efter 19 års krig som halverat jordbruksproduktionen och pressat den årliga per capita-inkomsten till 800 kronor. GUNILLA VON HALL

Fotnot: I Sverige beslagtogs narkotikatill ett värde av drygt 300 miljoner kronor 1994. Runt 37 procent var syntetiska droger, liksom mycket var kokain och cannabis och 25 procent var heroin. Man räknar med att 10 procent av all narkotika som kommer in i landet beslagtas. Heroinets väg till Sverige går främst via Turkiet och Balkan, enligt UNDCP (United Nations International Drug Control Program).

Terrorn ökar i Afghanistan

Talibaneernas förtryck börjar likna etnisk rensning

Arbeteet

30/9-97

PESHAWAR

● När talibaneerna för ett år sedan tog över Kabul så godtog omvärlden omvälvningen med både uppgivenhet och försiktig optimism.

Trots oron för den nya radikala islamistiska rörelsen så hoppades man att det krigsförödda Afghanistan äntligen skulle få uppleva ett slut på raden av konflikter som under nästan 20 år krävt 100.000-tals mänskors liv.

Det blev inte så.

I stället har talibaneerna på många sätt förvärrat situationen.

Konflikten har förvandlats till ett etniskt krig där hat och fruktan i mycket ersatt makthungern som drivkraft.

Talibaneerna tillhör den dominerande pashtunstammen och tycks fast besluta att förvandla landet till ett pashtoonistan.

Stora förluster i militära fissioner i norr har fått dem att utkräva vedergällning mot "fienden" bland civilbefolkningen.

Tajiker, uzbeker och hazaras fruktar för sin frihet, kultur och

överlevnad: många av de strikta dekret som talibaneerna utfärdar i islams namn – bland annat den totala segregationen av kvinnor – är mer pasthunk tradition än tolkningar av islam.

De första tecknen på en etnisk rensning jagar skräck i de minoriteter som lever i talibankontrollerade områden.

Vittnesmålen är för många för att avfärdas.

Mer än 100.000 tajiker har drivits bort från sin hem i Charikhar-on, områden 60 km norr om Kabul och lever nu hos redan trångbodda släktningar eller på gatorna i huvudstaden.

Flera tusen tajiker och uzbeker har arresterats under nattliga raider och dörrknackningar i Kabul.

Fängelserna är överfulla och talibaneerna använder nu gamla containers för kuvning och kortare straff.

Biståndsarbetarna rapporterar att de nästan dagligen ser män tillhörande etniska minoriteter förs bort från huvudsta-

den hopträngda på lastbilsflak och bevakade av beväpnade talibane.

– Det är lätt att känna igen dem på deras mongoliska ursprung, säger en kanadensisk läkare verksam i Kabul.

De festa släpps efter tre till tio dygn, mishandlade, ibland torterade men mest av allt döörsäda.

En del har försunnit och tros ha förts till Kandahar, talibaneernas högkvarter i söder, men rykten om avrättningar har inte kunnat bekräftas.

Talibaneerna led svåra förluster vid erövrandet av Mazar- och Iharif, huvudstad i norr, i slutet av maj då civilbefolkningen reste sig mot dem. Hazaras, som är shiamuslimer, avrättade hundratals i brutala gatustrider. Liksom många dödades när befälhavaren Mazud lockade talibaneerna i en dödsfälla norr om Kabel något senare.

För att undvika ett totalt sönderfall har talibaneerna rekryterat mer än 15.000 pasthunska

ungdomar vid koranskolor i Pakistan och ytterligare 2.000 har mobiliserats bland den pasthunka minoriteten i norr.

Samtidigt har man välkomnat ökända f.d. mujahedin-krigare i sina led och förlätit de pasthuner som tjänade den sovjetiska marionettregimen under tio års ockupation.

Pasthuner i Kabul har enats bakom talibaneerna av etniska skäl och de få intellektuella som inte har flytt är tysta.

Men de etniska minoriteterna i norr förblir "gudlösa kommunister" i den talibanska propagandan.

Det har blivit till ett intensifierat heligt krig för profeten, islam och pasthoonistan.

– Det står helt klart att talibaneerna inte tänker dela makten med någon, säger Rahimullah Yosufzai. Pakistans främste Afghanistanläkare.

Ett vanvettigt dödande hotar framöver.

BO GUNNARSSON, text

metro

970922

Afghanistans kulturarv hotat

Det långa kriget i Afghanistan har inte bara lagt en stor del av det moderna samhället och dess institutioner i ruiner. Även betydande delar av landets mångtusenåriga kulturarv håller på att förstöras.

– Omvärlden måste ta på sig ett ansvar för att rädda Afghanistan från en förlust som på sikt kan te sig ännu mera förödande än raserade städer, anser den amerikanska historikern Nancy Dupree.

Hon är en av världens främsta

kännare av Afghanistan. I många år har hon varit bosatt i landet eller, som nu, i Pakistan. Där är hon verksam inom Spach, Sällskapet för bevarandet av Afghanistans kulturarv. Hon besöker nu Sverige för att bland annat berätta om hotet mot det afghanska kulturarvet och plädera för hjälp med att rädda det som återstår.

Före kriget hade huvudstaden Kabul ett välutrustat museum som genom tiotusentals föremål gav en bild av de kulturer som

satt sin prägel på landet. Afghanistan var den östra utposten i Alexander den stores imperium, här bedrevs framgångsrik buddhistisk mission och redan på 600-talet nådde islam hit. Särpräglade inhemska kulturer var också väl dokumenterade.

I dag återstår bara 20 procent av samlingen, sedan några år i relativ trygghet på ett hotell i Kabul. Museibyggnaden är till stor del sönderskjuten.

GERT HOLMERTZ/TT

Afghanistans framtid finns hos kvinnorna

Kvinnopendeln slår fram och tillbaka, fram och tillbaka. I ena studen stor frihet, i den andra tvång. Slöja på, slöja av, ut och in på arbetsmarknaden och så ut igen. Få länder har som Afghanistan kastats mellan polerna, från medeltid till nutid och tillbaka igen. De finns som säger att talibaneerna nu är på väg att föra Afghanistan åter till medeltiden. Men de lyckas nog inte. Ingen har i längden förmått kuva detta folk, eller skall man säga dessa folk, de etniska grupperna är många.

Det talibaneerna nu gör mot kvinnorna har inte stöd i Koranen – där står inget som förbjuder kvinnor att arbeta, inget om slöjtvång eller att flickor inte skall få gå i skola eller behöva avstå från högre utbildning.

Men nästan alltid har männen – se bara på grannlandet Pakistan – haft tolkningsföreträdet. Dagens talibanska herrar tror sig kanske styra i islams namn, men vad är religionen om inte en täckmantel för maktbegär och resultatet av en välcementerad patriarchal struktur.

I förra veckan greps EU-kommissionären Emma Bonino av talibaneerna. Journalister i hennes sällskap hade fotograferat på en mödravårdscentral. Kvinnor får inte fotograferas. Det borde de ha vetat och möjligen respekterat. Bonino släpptes visserligen efter några timmar med en ursäkt. Talibaneerna begrep kanske att de hade lekt med elden. Bonino är chef för EU:s humanitära bistånd och utan bistånd dör folket.

Hur långt skall de som arbetar i humanitetens namn böja sig för talibanska påfund. Vad skall respekteras och vad bekämpas? Och är allt det vi finner kvinnodiskriminerande verkligen detta? Naturligtvis inte. Familjens roll, kvinnans roll och männen är djupt rotade i andra kulturella traditioner än våra. Det kulturella gapet går inte bara mellan västvärlden och Afghanistan, det har alltsedan seklets början också gått mellan stad och landsbygd, mellan elit och majoritet, mellan den högutbildade urbana kvinnan och bykvinnan.

Härförleden gav Nancy Dupree, amerikansk historiker och en av västerlandets främsta kännares av Afghanistan, på inbjudan av Svenska Afghanistankommittén en föreläsning i Göteborg om afghanska kvinnors villkor. Hon pekade på just dessa klyftor inom landet som en av orsakerna till "den oreda som råder," men hon visste också att berätta att tiden i flyktinglägren i Pakistan överbryggat motsättningar. Kabuls kvinnor har lärt av landsbygdens och tvärtom.

När jag nu läser om nya talibanska övergrepp tänker jag på hennes uppmaning till alla hjälpororganisationer. Ge inte upp – det drabbar bara civilbefolkningen – försök istället att med tålmod och diplomatisk finurlighet arbeta vidare. Det går, menade hon, eftersom det finns talibane och talibane – alla är faktiskt inte så ultrakonservativa som de som hörs mest ifrån huvudstaden. Inte är det heller så att flickor och kvinnor utestängs från skolor och arbete över hela Afghanistan. Det finns till och med talibanska ledare som säger till hjälparbetare: "gör vad ni vill – gör det bara inte här i Kabul.

Blundar tillräckligt många ges kvinnorna en chans och det är hos dem som Afghanistans framtid finns. Det är de som skall fostra nästa generation och nästa och nästa. Hos dem finns nyckeln till förändring.

10/10-97 Monika Tunbäck-Hanson

Medarbetare på GP:s kulturredaktion

Nya regler drabbar afghanska kvinnor

22/9 - 97

många gånger. En förklaring som Nancy Dupree en av världens ledande experter på Afghanistan, ger är att talibaneerna måste upprätthålla drömmen om jihad – det heliga kriget – för de unga soldater som risikerar livet vid fronten mot egena landsmän. Stridsviljan hos de unga männen handlar om en blind tro på att de skall skapa det rätta muslimska samhället. De har utbildats i religiösa skolor som startats för föräldralösa barn i afghanska flyktingläger i Pakistan – en utbildning som fortfarande pågår och där fler pojkar skolas till religiös fanatism.

Unga män härrörvättas

►Tragedin i Afghanistan fortgår med dagliga rapporter om strider och dödsoffer i den norra delen av landet, för närvärande koncentrerat till staden Mazar-i-Sharif. Samtidigt kämpar utilindiska biståndsorganisationer och medier mot hårdnande regler från de extrema islamistiska talibaneerna som behärskar ungefär två tredjedelar av landet.

Förhoppningen om att talibaneernas ideologiska inställning skulle mjuknna med tiden eller att de skulle bli mer förhandlingssvilda har grusats

förbjuds att kommentera eller analysera situationen samt att intervju kvinnor. Sedlighetsdepartementet kan hela tiden köra över andras beslut. Att bli anklagad för att vara antimuslimsk är något makthavarna råds, och därför uppstår ofta vakuum där inge vill fatta beslut alls, berättar Nancy Dupree. Dessutom gör den religiösa polisen som misshandlat kvinnor offentligt för påstådda regelbrott.

Kriget slukar pengar

Det svåraste, säger Nancy Dupree, är att kriget slukar pengar som finns, främst från opiumodlingen, och nödvändigt uppgördningen, fast tillbaka. Men mitt i allt det svårta ser hon ändå hopp. Hon berättar om en kvinnlig bekant, en lättarinnan i Kabul som har kringgått förbjudet för flickor att gå i skolan genom att starta undervisning i sitt hem för flickor. Makthavarna är medvetna om hennes initiativ och har inga invändningar.

CARINA STENSSON

Alra hårdast har kanske kvinnorna drabbats sedan talibaneerna tog makten över huvudstaden Kabul för ett år sedan. Nyligen protesterade Svenska Afghanistankommittén tillsammans med flera andra biståndsorganisationer offentligt mot nya regler från talibaneernas sedlighetsdepartement därforat bryter mot internationella principer om humanitär hjälp.

Kvinnor stångs inne

I de nya reglerna heter det bland annat att "bistånd till ändor och fattiga kvinnor ska lämnas via deras släktningar utan inblandning av kvinnlig personal. Om kvinnor ges bistånd eller anställs av hjälpororganisationer skall tillstånd först ges till sedlighetsdepartementet. Kvinnor får inte lämna sin hem".

Igår infördes också nya regler för utländska medier som beordrades att "undvika rapportering som inte överensstämmer med afghanska regler och traditioner", och utländska journalister i landet



Nancy Dupree

försvåras alla försök till fredsförhandlingar av att gränslämna Pakistan, Iran, Ryssland, Tadzjikistan, Uzbekistan med flera irriterat hajar på. De ger bränsle till striderna, inte minst psykologiskt, och i olika utsträckning bidrar demedbåde pengar och vapen. Alla vill ha fred men alla vill också ha kontrollen över händen med olja och gas. Ingen bryr sig om afghanerna, de är bara i vägen, säger Nancy Dupree.

Dupree.

Rädsla för kvinnorna

”Talibanerna oförmögna att umgås med motsatta könet”

Arbete 23/9-97

● Kan vi fortsätta att ge bistånd till krigshärjade Afghanistan trots att talibanregimen förbjuder flickor att gå i skolan och landets kvinnor beordrats att hålla sig inomhus?

Nancy Dupree, amerikansk historiker som forskat kring Afghanistan i 40 år, anser det.

– Vad vi än tycker och säger så går det inte att låtsas som om talibanerna inte finns. Varken de eller deras idéer kommer att försvinna och vi måste trots alla känslor och svårigheter sträva efter en dialog och göra det bästa möjliga av situationen, säger hon i en intervju med AN:s medarbetare i Peshawar i Pakistan.

Kontroversiell

På onsdag kommer hon till Lund för att tala på Folkets Hus om det krigshärjade landets förskingrade kulturarv. Men som regel handlar de flesta frågorna till dr Dupree om den alarmerande kvinnosituationen.

För många är hennes åsikter kontroversiella. Hon talar om ”könsapartheid” men vägrar att se skeendet från ett västerländskt eller feministiskt perspektiv.

– Mer än 90 procent av Afghanistans kvinnor finns på landsbygden och de har alltid levit i burkha och förvägrats vad vi ser som ett ”normalt liv”, säger hon. De märker troligen mest positiva förändringar under talibanerna. Viktigast för dem är att det äntligen är fred och det är lag



Nancy Dupree, amerikansk historiker, förmeldar information om de afghanska kvinnornas livsvillkor.

Foto: PETER HJUKSTRÖM

och ordning och kvinnofrid.

Att halva landets befolkning getts besked om att hålla sig inomhus anser hon bebor mer på afghansk och pashtunsk tradition än på en extrem tolkning av islam:

– I Centralasien har män och kvinnor alltid levit i skiljda världar.

De har accepterat sin roll eftersom de inte vet av något annat.

Befriade slavar

– I det patriarchaliska bondesamhället är det en hedersak att beskydda kvinnorna och talibanerna, som kommer just från landsbygdens underklass, anser att man bäst gör det genom att hålla dem bakom husets murar, säger Nancy Dupree.

Hon anser att det segregerade samhället inte nödvändigtvis behöver vara för-

tryckande: Storfamiljen ger gemenskap och kvinnorna kan arbeta på fälten med sina män.

Totalt annorlunda är det i Kabul som talibanerna erövrade för exakt ett år sedan. Här har kvinnor haft möjlighet till utbildning och förvärvsarbete sedan 1960-talets början och under den tio års långa sovjetiska ockupationen gavs de också en politisk roll och utnyttjades i propagandan som ”befriade slavar”. De klädde sig västerländska, de roade sig på diskotek som vi och de för utomlands.

Gudlös dekadans

– Vad som sker nu är att talibanerna försöker utplåna varje spår av ”gudlös dekadans”, säger Nancy Dupree. Det onda skall upp med rötterna och det blir till en kollektiv bestraffning och vederbörlig tillstånd som tar sig för oss extrema uttryck.

Utfallet är en katastrof för alla, både ekonomiskt och socialt. I Kabul lever många i kärnfamiljer och kvinnornas isolering har blivit total.

Rent psykologiskt handlar det här om att skydda männen.

De flesta talibanerna har vuxit upp på koranskolor i Pakistan och hjärnvättats av fundamentalistiska mullor som anser att kvinnorna är alltigenom sexuella varelser och att deras enda funktion är att störa männen religiösa studier.

– Håll er borta från dem, håll dem inlåsta så ni inte ut-

sätter er för frestelser, predikar de.

Nancy Dupree menar att de unga talibanerna inte har en aning om hur man umgås med kvinnor och att de är oförmögna att tala med sina egna systrar, kusiner eller fastrar. De är rädda för kvinnor och rädda för sin egen reaktion om kvinnor skulle få gå utan burkha.

Förändring?

– Verkligheten kommer med tiden att tvinga talibanerna att moderera sin stränga kvinnosyn och de strikta klädedreglerna när de blivit mer etablerade. Familje- och klanheder är oerhört viktigt bland pashtunerna men genom att värna om kvinnornas kyskhet vill talibanerna också bevisa att de är goda muslimer.

– Vi kan inte godta deras sätt att beskydda men en starkare konfrontationslinje från västvärlden gör det än viktigare för talibanerna att framstå som de bästa av alla muslimer, säger hon.

Några ljusare tecken?

– Ja, talibanerna har ingen enhetlig politik. Lokala makthavare har sista ordet och många är moderata. Därför kan Svenska Afghanistankommittén driva hemskolor och ge utbildning åt 30.000 flickor. Det går fortfarande att hjälpa och det är viktigt att inte stänga dörren definitivt. Det är en lång process vi har framför oss.

BO GUNNARSSON, text

Massivt samarbete för världens barn

Skånska 269-97
SKÅNE Dagbladet

**– Är det något som
kan hjälpa barn i
Afghanistan så är
det kampanjer som
Världens Barn, inte
FN.**

**Nancy Dupree berät-
tar om ett av projek-
ten som insamlings-
kampanjen ska bi-
dra till. Nu inleds
kampanjens arran-
gemang i Skåne.**

Trots att regeringarna i 190 länder undertecknat FN:s barnkonvention förnekas hela tiden barnen grundläggande rättigheter. Radiohjälpen och sju svenska biståndsorganisationer startade för en vecka sedan den riksomfattande insamlingskampanjen "Världens Barn", som nu tar fart även i Skåne.

– Det är mycket spänande att så olika organisationer samarbetar i en kampanj. Det är av största vikt att skapa förståelse för utsatta barns situation runt om i världen, säger Jenny Anderberg, Skånesamordnare i kampanjen, och hoppas på en rekordstor insamling.

De insamlade pengarna ska bland annat gå till stöd för sexuellt utnyttjade barn i Baltikum, rehabilitering av barnsoldater i Liberia, gatubarnsprojekt i Mosambique och barnarbetare i Nicaragua.

I GAZA

Två andra projekt som insamlings och riktar sig till är handikappade barn i Gaza och utbildningsmöjligheter för flickor i Afghanistan.

Kent Härstedt har bland annat i sitt tidigare arbete vid ut-

rikesdepartementet besökt Mellanöstern vid flera tillfällen och idag arbetar han bland annat för ett fredsinstitut där.

I våras reste Kent Härstedt till Gaza för att besöka flyktinglägret Jabalaiya där Individuell Människohjälp, IM, driver ett habiliteringscenter för utvecklingsstörda barn.

Där får 24 barn mellan två och tio år individuell träning som innebär nya möjligheter i livet.

– Flyktinglägret med över 90 000 mäniskor är renaslämmen där ingen stimulans eller trygghet finns för barnen. IM:s arbete här är för de mest glömda mäniskorna, de barn som inte har en chans och som är värst utsatta. Här har man byggt upp förskola och yrkesutbildning. De blir aldrig helt återställda, men får drägliga levnadsförhållanden, berättar Kent Härstedt.

Han tillägger att insamlingen är till för att lindra barnens nöd som i sin tur kan leda till att det tänds ett hopp om framtidens.

– Barnen i Gaza har inget att förlora. Det är få platser jag kommit till som visar en så utbrett hopplöshet som Gaza. I brist på hopp är mäniskorna till exempel beredda att rekryteras till terrororganisationer.

SKOLA FÖR FLICKOR

Nancy Dupree är amerikansk historiker och en av världens främsta specialister på Afghanistan där hon levt i halva sitt liv.

Idag, drygt 70 år gammal, arbetar hon bland annat som informationsansvarig åt AC-BAR, en samarbetsorganisation för 50-talet internationella biståndsorganisationer med verksamhet i Afghanistan.

För dem som ifrågasätter bistånd till ett land som Afghanistan, där regimen är emot mänskliga rättigheter, vill

Nancy Dupree poängtera att det kanske är där stödet behövs som mest. Hon pekar på att Afghanistan ligger mitt i ett viktigt politiskt område och fortsätter kaoset i landet kan det spridas i hela regionen och ställa till stora problem.

– FN har lovat 133 miljoner dollar i stöd för Afghanistan, men idag har de hittills endast fått en fjärdedel av summan. Därför vill jag betona vikten av kampanjer som dessa, det är de som ger pengar och effektivt bistånd - inte FN, säger Nancy Dupree.

BYSKOLOR FINNS

Idag finns inga officiella skolor för flickor i Afghanistan, men talibanerna, fundamentalistiska muslimer, säger att de inte har något emot utbildning för flickor, men att det behövs tid innan detta kan införas.

– Intresset fokuseras på slagfältet, inte de sociala frågorna.

Hon betonar att det inte bara är formell utbildning i att skriva, läsa och räkna som flickorna och kvinnorna behöver. De behöver också utbildning i traditionell hälsovård.

Innan den ordinarie skolgången återinförs för båda könen drivs små byskolor med hjälp av internationellt bistånd från bland annat Sverige. Lärarnas löner får dock byarna själva stå för.

Insamlingen ska pågå fram till den 24 oktober då den kulminerar i en direktsänd TV-gala. Organisationerna i kampanjen, Diakonia, Internationell Människohjälp, Lutherhjälpen, Rädda Barbeb, SOS Barnbyar och Svenska Afghanistankommittén, får alla lika stor del av insamlingen.

Första arrangemanget i Skåne blir nu på lördag då Röda Korset arrangerar en manifestation på Gustav Adolfs torg.

Pia Lobell

040-660 55 89

Afghanistanrörelsens grand old lady ger inte upp:

Svik inte flickorna i Kabul

Av
TOMAS LÖFSTRÖM

Det fanns ett litet stenhuvud på museet i Kabul, bara några centimeter stort. På en maskinskriven papperslapp kunde man läsa: "Stenskulptur, från Aq Kupruk (Mazar), 20 000 f Kr." Ingenting mer, men tanken svindlade.

Vad har hänt med stenen från Aq Kupruk? Jag frågar Nancy Dupree, Afghanistan-veteran, engagerad i biståndsarbetet, aktiv i olika projekt för att rädda det afghanska kulturarvet.

– Ah, du menar "Daddy's head"! säger hon.

Det var hennes man, arkeologen Louis Dupree, som fann steinen. En gång skulle han och familjen ta den med till USA för att ställa ut den. Han fick skriva på en förbindelse där han lovade ersätta afghansta staten med en miljon dollar ifall den försvann.

– Louis var så slarvig, säger Nancy. Jag var väldigt nervös. Barnen också. I en fullpropad hiss i New York ropade plötsligt vår själriga dotter: "Pappa, du har väl ditt huvud i flickan?"

Det hade han. Men nu är "Daddy's head" försvarnul. Museet har plundrats flera gånger under kriget. Åttio procent av de värderliga samlingarna är borta.

1975 reste jag till Afghanistan. I Kabul hade jag ständigt en liten bok i fickan, "A Historical Guide to Kabul". Den var tryckt lokalt på dåligt papper men skriven av en amerikansk som verkade kunna allt som var värt att veta, Nancy Hatch Dupree. Jag träffade henne händräck dä, men nu 1997 möts vi i Malmö. Vi är båda tjugotvå år äldre; Nancy är, vilket jag hela tiden glömmer, smart sjuttiopå. Afghanistan är till döden sargat av kriget. Det Kabul vi älskade finns inte mer.

Hur stor är förstörelsen i Afghanistan?

– Två tredjedelar av Kabul är förstört, säger Nancy. Ruiner,



Nancy Hatch Dupree kom till Afghanistan 1962. Hon är oförträfflig i sitt arbete för landet.

står Kabul och stora delar av landet, att kvinnorna ska bärta hel täckande slöja, de får inte arbeta ute, hemmet, flickskolor har stängts. Hur ska man se på detta?

– Omvärlden säger: det är islam! Talibana använder sig också av islam, men i själva verket är det afghanernas gamla patriarkiala regelverk. Delvis handlar det om okunskap: talibana vet ingenting om världen. De är utbildade i koranskolor och har aldrig umgått med moderna kvinnor. De skräms av allt nytt och utländskt, därför stänger de biografier och musikaffärer. De reagerar också, med rätta, mot dekadensen och korrupcionen bland mujahedin. Men när det gäller kvinnorna är det mer subtilt än så. Genom att kontrollera kvinnorna visar talibana ner att de är starka.

Nancy talar lägmält och intensivt. Hon ger en balanserad bild av läget, ingenting är riktigt svartvitt. Och hon är i grunden optimist. Men hennes optimism hamtar sin näring i realistiska erfarenheter. Hon nämner exempel med "lädbiblioteken", små mobila boksamlingar som förs in i Afghanistan av barfotabibliotekarier. En av dem är mullah; han har läдан i moskén. Och det är den vägen man måste gå: via individer, utbildning på gräsrotsnivå, goda exempel. Och när man utbildar en kvinna utbildar man en hel familj.

– Vi måste få folk att inse att det är de som har makten. Då kan de i sin tur gå vidare och ställa krav och förändra samhället. Det sker inte över en natt, men om det inte sker nu kommer de unga krigarnas machoideologi att ta över.

Det finns hjälpparationer som vacklar i den svåra situationen som råder. "Save the Children" har lämnat Herat. "Oxfam" har hotat att ge sig av. Men vi får inte svika nu. Flickorna i Afghanistan kan inte vänta. De är morgondagens mödrar.

Nancy kräver talibana, som

Tomas Löfström är författare och kulturskribent.

Sydsvenska Dagbladet 28/9 - 97

I skuggan av ett krig

Afghanistan plundras på sina antikviteter

DH 22/9-97

Av Mats Lundegård

Hon skrattar lätt och gärna, talar livligt. Och andå talar hon om en av vår moderna tids stora tragedier, Afghanistan. sönderfall och lidande, talibaneernas väldesregemente och just denna dag framför allt om den systematiska plundringen av landens antikviteter.

– Det är en skam, säger Nancy Dupree, amerikanska och kanske en av de främsta kännarna av Afghanistan och dess historia. Av vinningslystnad gör man mäniskor historielösa.

Hon har sett det ske under åren av krig och väldsmästeri. Hon har sett stödgodset när det förslats ut ur landet via Peshawar i Pakistan där hon förestår ACBAR (Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief) ett bibliotek och studiecenter. Hon har erbjutits att köpa artefakter som hon själv skrivit om i guideböcker och kataloger.

– Man har erbjutit oss föremål som jag vet kommer från museet i Kabul, berättar hon. Man har begått fantasiplacer. Hur ska vi kunna tävla med kriminella, internationella antikvitetshandlare... Och är det för överrigt moraliskt förvarbart att handla med dessa ting.

AFGHANISTAN ÄR ETT land med lång och färgrik historia. Över dess högslätter och bergspass har handelskaravanner och erövringstår dragit fram från historiens gryning, kulturer och mäniskor har blandats och för blandats. Minnen finns i lager på lager, i ruinstäder och gravfält.

När europeiska och amerikanska arkeologer under mellankrigstiden fick tillstånd att börja gräva efter antikviteter fann de enorma skatter. Som fördes till museer i Paris och på andra håll i Europa men mängder av ovärderliga fynd samlades i museet i Kabul.

De överlevde den sovjetiska ockupationen oskadda men när inbördeskriget började böja fram och tillbaka över Kabul inleddes också brandskattningen av museet.

– Vi vet att borttät åttio procent av samlingarna fördes bort, säger Nancy Dupree. Man satte ut vakter bevaras men de köptes naturligtvis upp och medverkade småningom i stölderna. Det fanns köpare både i Afghanistan och Pakistan, hela nätverk av smugglare och handlare med förbindelser ut i världen.

Hon berättar om de rester av samlingarna som idag finns intakta i källaren på ett hotell i stan. De är katalogisera och under kontroll.

– Men vi vet inte var den stora guldföremålet från baktrisk tid finns, säger hon. Talibaneerna säger att den ligger säker i en källare under nationalbanken men ingen utomstående har fått kontrollera att det är sant.

Det handlar om mer än tjugotusen guldföremål från tiden kring Kristi födelse som sovjetiska arkeologer fann i norra Afghanistan 1978. De är ovärderliga och oskattbara – eller var.

Man vet att höga makthavare i

Pakistan sitter på många av de föremål som stals från museet i Kabul. Och man vet att mycket av det som försunnit har bjuds ut på exklusiva konstmarknader i London, Tokyo och Geneve.

– Det finns tillräckligt många tillräckligt skrupelfria mäniskor i den här branschen och tillräckligt mycket pengar att tjäna i varje led...

Hon säger att hon har svårt att förstå de fattigbönder som gräver på arkeologiska platser för att få fram fornyfnd att sälja. Men hon kan djupt beklaga att de förstör utgrävningsplatser för all framtid eftersom de inte vet vad de håller på med.

– Men vi vet att i Ai Khanoum agerar de lokala pamparna som om dessa förhistoriska gravfält var guldnydigheter. Man säljer markområden till lugnade utgrävare. Man har till och med grävt med lastmaskiner här. Resultatet är naturligtvis en katastrof.

AI KHANOUM med jättelika fynd från grekiskt-baktrisk tid, alltså den period som földe på Alexander den stores fälttag i Asien (300-talet före Kristus) upptäcktes så sent som 1965 av franska arkeologer. De startade utgrävningar som pågick fram till slutet av sjuttiotalet. Men sedan kom politiska oroligheter och småningom den sovjetiska invasionen av Afghanistan emellan. Sovjettrupper kontrollerade under många år området men efter kriget tog frihetskämparna över och 1992 började den systematiska plundringen av området. Ingen vet hur mycket antikviteter som stulits här men John Hayward skrev för ett år sedan i tidningen i Afghanistan. Nytt om tusentals föremål som under åren förts ut på den internationella konstmarknaden.

– Det går inte att stoppa utförsäljningen av Afghanistan kulturarv, konstaterade han. Men kanske kunde man övertala någon att dokumentera vad som har hittats och vart det har tagit vägen...



"Av vinningslystnad gör man mäniskor historielösa", säger Nancy Dupree.

Hjälpinsamling till barn

Stor manifestation i Malmö i morgon

Arbete 24/9-97
MALMÖ

tober.

Pengarna ska bland annat gå till rehabilitering av barnsoldater i Liberia, till gatubarnsprojekt i Mocambique och till arbete för att även flickorna i Afghanistan ska få möjlighet att gå i skolan.

Det sistnämnda genom Svenska Afghanistankommitténs deltagande i Världens Barn. I veckan är Nancy Dupree, amerikansk historiker som AN skrev om i tisdagstidningen, här för föreläsa. Hon är en av världens främsta specialister på Afghanistan och kämpar för de afghanska flickornas rätt till utbildning. Och hon trycker hårt på hur viktigt det är med insamlingar som Världens Barn.

DANIEL PETTERSON, text

Över 6 000 kronor till flickskolor i Afghanistan

Utbildningsfrågan har högsta prioritet i Svenska Afghanistankommitténs - program. I mer än tio år har utbildningsstöd till barn lämnats i hundratals skolor på landsbygd.

Av 150 000 barn och ungdomar får 25 000 flickor del av skolsatsningen, dock en i dag hotad disciplin på grund av reglering i landet.

Oförtrutet arbetar SAK världen och håller ställningarna i en pressad situation. Skövde-kommittén med förgrening i länet har tagit flickskolan Bibi Fatima, Baghlan i norra Afghanistan, som sin faddersko-

la. De pengar som kommer in genom insamlingar går oavkortat till just den skolan.

Skövdeborna har antagit utmaningen från insamlingskampanjen "Förvara flickornas rätt till utbildning". Hittills under året har 6 119 kronor lämnats i bössor utställda i butiker och varuhus. Vid senaste tömningen kunde noteras 1 970 kronor, som markerar ett avslut på kampanjen. Nya bössor har ställts ut med fokusering denna gång på Världens barn. Höstens stora radiohjälpskampanj med åtta hjälporperationer i förening.

Talibanregimen beroende av lönsamma opiumexporten

Årets opiumskörd, den största någonsin, rullar just över den afghanska gränsen in i Pakistan. Det som tidigare beskrivits som smuggling är nu reducerat till en fråga om ren transport: Åsneryggarna har ersatts av lastbilar och pick-ups och det hela sker i det närmaste lika öppet som exporten av aprikoser, meloner och mandel.

Tullarna på den pakistanska sidan tittar åt andra hållet, säger en biståndsarbetare som arbetar med talibanaerna i Afghanistan och därfor vill vara anonym.

Två gånger, senast i augusti, har de puritanska talibanaerna förklarat all narkotika som *haram*, d v s osislamsk, och lovat att vidta åtgärder för att förbjuda ”odling av heroin” liksom all försäljning och användning av illegala droger.

Men samtidigt säger man att befolkningen är så utarmad att det är omöjligt att förbjuda odling av opiumvallmo.

Från cannabis till opium

De har därfor nöjt sig med att slå till mot det mindre skadliga cannabis med påföjd att många fattiga bönder bytt gröda och gått över till opiumproduktion.

Under talibanaernas religiösa styre gör den ”Gyllene halvmånen”, som det laglösa gränslandet mot Pakistan kallas, verkligen skäl för sitt namn.

Sanningen att säga så är talibanaerna, ”Allahs svärd”, helt beroende av opiuminkomsterna för att finansiera sitt krig mot den ”osislamska” oppositionen.

De har knappast några andra inkomster: Tio procents *zakat*, skatt på opiumförsäljningen, beräknas ge uppemot 300 miljoner kronor om året.

Många av talibanaernas ledare är direkt inblandade i handeln och mycket tyder på att de första heroinlaboratorierna redan startat sin dödsbringande produktion inne i landet.

Mullah Yarana, en av de mest inflytelserika ledarna som är bosatt i den pakistanska gränsstaden Chaman, anses vara hu-

vudman bakom ett syndikat som smugglar tonvis av heroin till USA och Europa via Iran.

Godkänt för ”export”

Länge avvisades anklagelser om inblandning i opiumhandeln som ”antitalibansk propaganda”. Men trots att rörelsens allsmäktige, **Mullah Omar**, i fjol höstas utfärdade ett dekret som förbjöd all hantering av opium, så försvarar man nu ofta hett ”exporten”.

– Sovjetiska bomber och västerländska vapen har förstört vårt land men ni bidrar inte det minsta till återuppbryggnaden, sa en

” – Det är enda sättet för bönderna att överleva och de skulle göra uppror om vi förbjöd det. ”

talesman i Kabul nyligen. Vi har inte många alternativ. Bevattningsystemen är förstörda och vallmon är den tåligaste och mest profitabla grödan...

– Det är enda sättet för bönderna att överleva och de skulle göra uppror om vi förbjöd det, sa en taliban som jag mötte i Peshawar.

Han uppgav att regimen konfiskerat kilovis av droger och krossat flera syndikat.

Andra talibanaer är mer militanta och hävdar att opium är ett vapen och en vederläggning mot den icke-islamska världen.

– Det är vår egen atombomb, sa en bon-

de i Kandahar i våras till en australisk journalist.

Ingen tycks bry sig det minsta om att miljontals ungdomar i Ryssland och västvärlden förslavas av heroin och att en döds-epidemi redan sveper fram över grannlandet Pakistan.

Själva håller de rent inom de egna gränserna: Afghansk ungdom som missbrukar narkotika utsätts ofta för offentligt spöstraff.

Bönder som odalar opiumvallmo tjänar i genomsnitt 8.000 kronor om året och kan dessutom få ut en skörd av vete eller majs. Det är tre gånger mer än vad andra bönder kan få ut från samma areal.

90 procent i talibanområdena

Det faktum att slutprodukten heroin stigit flera hundra gånger i värde anses naturligt.

– Många tar risker som rätfärdig gör en extra stor belöning, har en kommandant i Jalalabad sagt.

Omkring 2.500 ton av opium anses ha skördats i Afghanistan i sommar, 90 procent i områden som kontrolleras av talibanaerna.

FN har i sommar startat ett projekt för att få de afganska bönderna att odla alternativa grödor och hoppas att det skall få talibanaerna på andra tankar.

– Om inte så drar vi oss ur och låter dem stå där med halvfärdiga dammar och bevattningskanaler, säger **Angus Geddes**, en av de ansvariga.

Flera andra biståndsgivare väntas ställa liknande krav.

Bo Gunnarsson

Hjälporganisationer hotar lämna Afghanistan

Garantera ett minimum av säkerhet åt våra utländska och afghanska medarbetare – annars avbryter vi hjälpinsatserna...

De nordiska hjälporganisationerna ställer nu ultimatum till talibanregimen som sedan ett år styr i Kabul.

Vi menar vartenda ord och är beredda att ta konsekvenserna och lämna alla de områden som kontrolleras av talibanaerna, säger **Karin Ahrland**, ordförande i Svenska Afghanistankommittén (SAK).

Det är en lång rad av övergrepp och nya dekret från religiösa fanatiker som lett till en ohållbar situation.

I början av augusti fängslades **Abdul Qadeer**, SAK:s kontorschef i Kabul, efter en polisraid. Han anklagades för spioneri och

löper i en extrem situation risken att avrättas. Tidigare har en av SAK:s läkare, **dr Salb**, gripits av religiösa milisen och utsatts för en plågsam piskning som straff för att hans decimeter-långa skägg ansågs vara för kort. Och tolv medarbetare på SAK:s ortopedtekniska verkstad i Saijadabad som greps för samma ”brott” stängdes under sex timmar in i en oventilerad container där temperaturen låg över 50 grader och gavs senare husarrest.



Förödmjukade talibamer. Sedan krigslyckan åter svängt hålls ett stort antal talibanska soldater fängna av motståndarna i den Nordliga alliansen, som här i en av Ahmed Shah Massoud kontrollerad by i Panjshirdalen, 100 km norr om Kabul.

FOTO: AFP / PRESSENS BILD

Tidigare har två kvinnor, som med myndigheternas tillstånd deltagit i en barnmorskekurs, hållits fängslade under fem dygn i Laghman-provinsen anklagade för att vara "pakistaniska prostituerade".

Peter Hjukström på Afghanistankommitéen i Stockholm bekräftar att också andra hjälpparperationer drabbats av "religiöst godtycke och vanvett".

I staden Maidan Shar har talibanaerna tagit över katolska CARE:s kontor och gjort

det till ett fängelse för hela personalen. I Ghazni har norska kommitéens verksamhet paralyserats: Deras hus har två våningar vilket lett till anklagelser om att medarbetare kunnat se skymten av kvinnor i grannhuset...

Många afghanska hjälparbetare har också gripits i de massarresteringar som ägt rum sedan mitten av juli. Lika viktigt är att "Avdelningen för bevarande av sedlighet och förhindrande av synd" utfärdat nya de-

kret som gör det helt omöjligt för utländska hjälpporgan att anställa kvinnor för viktigare uppgifter. Det i sin tur innebär att man tvingas överge alla förhoppningar att göra en insats för landets kvinnor eftersom det är strikt förbjudet för manliga hjälparbetare att ha någon som helst kontakt med det andra könet.

—Vi har under 15 års insatser i Afghanistan aldrig tvekat om att ge humanitärt bistånd men det här är totalt oacceptabelt, säger Karin Ahrlund.

De nordiska kommitéerna är tillsammans med FN Afghanistan största bidragsgivare och det årliga stödet uppgår till 150 miljoner kronor. En femtedel av detta går till områden som kontrolleras av den störtade regimen, en verksamhet som talibanaerna kräver skall upphöra.

Det är inre oro i rörelsen som tros ligga bakom attackerna mot hjälpparperationerna.

— Ett världsfrämjant perspektiv och rader för förödande militära nederlag under den senaste tiden kan få märkliga uttryck, säger Peter Hjukström. Moralen sviktar och då ligger det nära till hands att se icke islamska organisationer som en källa till oron.

Bo Gunnarsson

Nylig var statssekretær Jan Egeland i Afghanistan, og her gjør han seg her refleksjoner om hva det norske valget kunne bety for vår hjelp til å gjenoppbygge landet.



NORGE krevede slutt på menneskerettighetsbrudd og kvinnediskriminering samt gjenåpning av jenlandsgruppa.

Foto: JAN EGELAND

I krigens Afghanistan har en generasjon norske skattekobtare og private givere reddet mange tusen menneskeliv. I Kabul har jeg sett hvordan norskfinanserte mineryddere sikrer at stadig færre barn får armer og bein sprengt bort. Siden Sovjetunionens brutale invasjon i 1979 har Norge vært blant dem som mest effektivt har stått for håndfast solidaritet med et fagtfelt fullt i kryssilden mellom lokale krigsherre støttet av kyniske internasjonale krefter.

Denne internasjonale solidariteten var nesten alle støtte av her i landet den gang da vi hadde mindre hus, biler, hytter, aksjer og sydenter og brukte mindre penger på trygder, pensjoner og helsesesong. Men i 1997 kan den kraftigste nye politiske vind bli egoismens. La oss gi blaffen i at vi aldri har brukt mer på oss selv, la oss ta bort den ene prosenten vi tidligere brukte på verdensfunnets fattigste og bruk også den på oss selv. Carl I. Hagen scorer tydeligvis poeng på å angripe vår hjelp til flyktninger ute og hjemme.

DEBATT



Jan Egeland
statssekretær

SIDE 3

Valget sett fra Afghanistan

Sett fra Kabul får Fremskriftspartiets framgang en helt spesiell valor: bolgen av antisolidaritet kommer ikke i et land med økende arbeidsløshet og reduserte sosiale programmer. Vi nordmenn har aldri brukt mer på oss selv verket offentlig eller privat.

Adjø solidaritet

Hva vil et gjenomslag for nynazistene i Norge innebære for Afghanistans fattige? For det første vil en aktiv kraft for fred og menneskerettigheter forsvinne. Helt siden norsk hjelpe ble initiert i 1954 (mens Finnmark ble gjenoppbygd og Norge selv fortsatt mottock Marshall-hjelpe) har vi gradvis fått en internasjonal innflytelse «som langt overgår landets folketall», for å støtte FN's visegeneralsekretær Yasushi Akasaka.

Når vi leder det neste møtet i den internasjonale givernlandsgruppen for Afghanistan, vil vi føres til en rekke tiltak på å true og lokke partene til å stanse krigshandling og respektere menneskerettigheter og kvinner rett til skolegang.

Uselvsk

Dernest ville oss selv nok lønjen innebære støtt til de land og krefter som ønsker fortsatt krig, undertrykkelse og kvinediskriminering blir enda mer dominerende i Afghanistan.

Etter å ha kjørt mer enn 600 kilometer i det krigsmessede landet, ble vi sterkt grepset av skjebnen til den hundretusener av kvinner og barn som går fra vondt til verre fordi det brukes så mye større ressurser på å rive ned enn på å bygge opp. Samtidig blir vi stoltet over å se hvordan uredede og uselviske

norske hjelpearbeidere redder liv og langtroms bygger forsoning og fred. Midt i ruinene sto også afganske mineryddere fram og uttrykte håp «om at Oslo-konferansen i september kan skape et internasjonalt forbud mot miner som dreper barn og andre sivile».

En reduksjon i norsk bistand ville imidlertid medføre at mineryddere, flyktninger ikke få hjelpe til å reise hjem og prosjekter som støtter jenter og kvinner i og mot et fundamentalistisk regime, skrinnlegges.

Krav til Talibanen

Det ville være totalt uansvarlig dersom et av verdens rikeste folk skulle vendte seg innover og redusere bistanden til afganerne, afrikanere eller palestinerne samtidig som behovene ute bare øker. Norsk bistand har aldri vært så effektiv og så fredsrettet som nå. Den har aldri vært gjenstand for så sterkt kvalitetskontroll som nå. Vi har aldri fått så økte gjenomslag for våre holdninger overfor land og folk som bryter menneskerettighetene. Derned fremmer vi fred og sikkerhet ikke bare for sårbare mennesker i frontlinjen, men også for oss selv.

Til og med Taliban-styret i Kabul er sårbar for norsk press på vegne av det internasjonale givernsfunn. Vi vil øremere gjeljen til å starte jenteskoler, gi kvinner rett til arbeid og til økt respekt for menneskerettighetene. Samtidig vil vi synge ut mot de krefter som vil fortsette krigene og undertrykkelsen. Haddie vi redusert vår bistand, ville vi ikke haft innflytelse. Den som er seg selv nok, er fattig.

Opprøret ulmer mot Taliban

28/9 - 97

Bergens Tidende

For ett år siden ble den aghanske hovedstaden Kabul erobret av den fundamentalistiske Taliban-militsen. BT har reist i militsens fotspor, og turen avslører at opprøret mot Taliban ulmer over alt.

KELD BROKSØ

Nanghar, Afghanistan

Kjempene er laget av knallhardt rosentre. Pakistanske grensevakter lar dem sveipe over aghanske flyktninger som ikke skynder seg raskt nok inn gjennom porten der det vakre Khyber-passet munner ut ved grensen til Afghanistan. Flyktningene vender hjem.

En gang var det 3,2 millioner aghanske flyktninger i Pakistan. Nå er det 1,2 millioner. Den skrøpelige freden til Taliban-makthaverne virker tiltrekkende. Til tross for nye kamper er det i år en nettotilvekst på 10.000 hjemvendte.

Musikk forbudt

Et ødelagt skilt ønsker velkommen til «Den Islamske Stat Afghanistan», og herfra er det 224 kilometer til Kabul. Min sjåfør Fariq har skrudd av sitt yndlingskassetten med iranske kjærlighetsduetter. Ved første Taliban-sjekkpunkt blir kassettbåndet brutalt trukket ut og dingler i den varme

vinden som girlandere på en nidstang over musikkubesenet.

Talibans område dekker nå tre fjerdedeler av Afghanistan. Musikk, teater, video, tv osv. er forbudt. Underholdning bremser studier av Koranen og forstyrre den muslimske levemåten, mener Taliban.

Langt fremme på landeveien, et snes kilometer nord for Talibans søndersukte, erobrede Kabul, buldrer kampene igjen. Nesten hver dag lar opposisjonens håp, militærstrategen Ahmad Shah Masud, noen raketter terrorisere millionbefolkingen i Kabul som han selv måtte flykte fra for nøyaktig ett år siden.

Forferdelige historier

Vi kjører ut over en trøstesløs slette. Bare nomadefolk kan ses i horisonten med sine forblåste telt, sauer og geiter. Plutselig dukker FN-telt opp, atskilt med murer som kvinner kan gjemme seg bak. Flyktningleiren Sar Shahi huser her 80.000 mennesker. Noen har bodd her i fire år. Andre, som 19-årige Mir Wais, har nettopp kommet fra Kabuls usikre ruiner i forstedene for å finne plass til familiene. Alle har forferdelige historier å fortelle.

En gruppe flyktninger samler seg rundt meg. - På mange måter er det blitt verre etter at Taliban har tatt makten. Det er vanskeligere å finne arbeid fordi Taliban bare tenker på krigen og religiøse skoler, sier en bitter mann, før leirsjefen - en høytstående Taliban-leder med hvit turban kommer og legger en demper på samtalen. Fra da av følger leirlederen hvert skritt jeg tar.

Også da flyktningen Faiz Mohammed inviterer inn i privaten til grønne. Han har høns og geiter gående ved familiens to telt og er stolt over at en av hans fire sonner har 12 års skolegang. Resten av familiene er i samme båt som 90 prosent av Afghanistans folk. De er analfabeter.

Tvilsom allianse

Faiz Mohammed unnskylder omgivelserne og forteller at han for fire år siden hadde stort hus og egen taxi. Den ble stjålet da general Rashid Dostums og Masuds styrker kjempet om Kabul. Nå har dødsfiendene av ren nød inngått en tvilsom allianse mot fellesfienden Taliban.

- Heller bo her i telt enn i et hus som ikke beskytter mot raketter og røvere, sier Faiz Mohammed. Han priser den danske hjelpeorganisasjonen for aghanske flyktninger, DACAAR, som i Sar Shahi har sørget for å bore brønner der det finnes drikkevann uten tyfus- og kolerasmitte.

Ellers kommer det lastebiler fra verdens matvareprogram som sikrer hver familie litt hvete. Familiens reelle livsgrunnlag er barnas salg av vann til passasjerer i overfylte busser.

Taliban-lederen går plutselig, og samtaler løper friere.

- Vi er glad for freden her. Men Talibans folk må lære at de bare kan regjere med en sentralmakt som ikke blander seg inn i for mye. Afghanerne vil ikke akseptere det, mener Faiz Mohammed.

Modig skoleinspektør

Nå blander Taliban seg i alt. Ikke

minst med en massiv undertrykkelse av kvinner som Taliban - blant utallige absurde forbud - utelukker fra utdannelse. Nå var det riktig nok bare noen få prosent som fikk sjansen før også. Like før Taliban erobret området finansierte EU byggingen av Mandrawar pikeskole. På innvielsen i mai var det flotte taler. Nå har den stått tom i fem måneder...

Skoleinspektør Abdul Rauf tenker høyt modige tanker under turbanen.

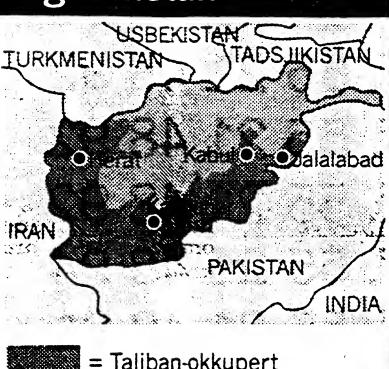
- Den er registrert som pikeskole. Jeg nekter å la gutter bruke den. Ellers vil Taliban bruke det som unnskyldning for å avvise jenter. Jeg har brukt 35 år på å undervise aghanske barn. Utdannelse er den eneste sjansen vi har til å komme videre etter 20 års krig. Landsbyen og lærerne er med meg i presset på Taliban. Jeg tror de bøyer seg. Ellers vil folk gjøre opprør!

Hjulpet av folket

Provinshovedstaden Jalalabad ser på overflaten ut som for et par år siden: Handelen i de smale gatene blomstrer. Her er mat nok på hyllene, men til priser langt fra alle kan betale. Men Talibans hvite flagg vaier nå som symbol på den harde religiøse justis.

Når mørket faller på i Jalalabad forsvinner gatelyset. Byens kino med nedbommet tak har forbud mot å vise film på den frittstående bakveggen. Den siste klissete indiske kjærlighetsfilmen er vist. Teateret er lagt ned. Levende og tapet musikk er forbudt.

afghanistan



= Taliban-okkupert

Faiz
afgha

”

Kl. 20.00 slutter mullahens messe fra minaretens femte plikthøn denne dagen. Det er den siste menneskeskapslyden før gneldrende, ville hunder og cicakene får stjernehim-melen for seg selv.

«Vi har skaffet dere sikkerhet», er Taliban-mullahens faste omkved. Men ingenier Mohammed Masood ser farene: «Afghanerne vil gjøre opprør mot alle forbudene. Men akkurat nå nyter folk at de kan trekke pusten etter 20 års kamper..

Om kvelden spiser jeg middag med en Taliban-leder. Mawlawi Zaman styrer en av de religiøse skolene, madrasaer, som klekker ut nye Taliban-soldater, og han leder landsbruksseksjonen i Laghman-provinsen.

Jenter, bare vent ...

– Taliban er ikke så ille som Vesten påstår, fastslår han. Jeg spør om Taliban-ideologien bakhånden mot de nordlige provinsen handler om tolkningen av Koranen. – Nei, de er gode muslimer. Men de har gjort den feilen at de har latt seg styre av andre land...

Mawlawi Zaman henter ut til Russland, Iran samt Tadsjikistan, Usbekistan og Turkmenistan som frykter at Taliban-fundamentalismen skyller inn over deres grenser. Bare Pakistan, Saudi-Arabia og De forente Arabiske Emirater har anerkjent Taliban-styret. Hjelpearbeidere er sikre på at våpen og penger følger med.

Mawlawi Zaman underer seg over at jeg spør så mye om kvinnenes rettigheter. Flere steder ute i landsbyene får de jo lov til å gå uten burquane som er påbudt i byene. – Vi er ikke imot pikseskoler. De må bare vente til vi har fred.

Jeg påpeker at det nå har vært fred i byen Kandahar i tre år.

– Ja, men nå er Norge i ferd med å få godkjent et pikseskole-prosjekt i Kabul. Det vil spre seg, sier Zaman, som samtidig lar det skinnne igjennom at det er forskjellige grader av Taliban-fanatismen her i provinsen. Mens Talibans øverste ledelse i Kandahar og Kabul dikterer fotoforbud av alt levende, tillater han en blitz rett opp i ansiktet.

Det store dilemma

Men hjelpeorganisasjonene har et stort dilemma. Det FN og andre organisasjoner oppfordret verdenssamfunnet til å donere 133 millioner dollar til Afghanistan i år, kom det inn langt under halvparten på grunn av Talibans kvinneundertrykking.

DACAARs prosjektlærer i Nangahar og Laghman, den danske antropologen Asta Olesen, erkjenner problemet.

– Men vi skal hjelpe fordi hoved-

parten av Talibans områder er fredelige nok til at vi kan gjøre det. Og prosjekter med drikkevann og helse kommer kvinner direkte til gode. Vi kan ikke overbevise Talibans om at jenter skal gå på skole, og vi bygger ikke flere skoler i det hele tatt for Talibans endrer seg. Men vi kan påvirke indirekte fordi de pikseskolene vi har bygget, får befolkningen til å legge og voldsmot press på Taliban. Dilemmaet er at vi ikke må ofre guttenes utdannelse. Afghanistan har desperat bruk for utdannet arbeidskraft, sier Asta Olesen.

De verste ruinhauge

Turen mot Kabul avslører at Talibans temt valkjer. Spesielt avstikker-veiene nordpå mot Kunar brukes til makt-demonstrasjoner av Masud-tillhengere som krabber ned fra fjellene og skaper panikk for å vise at Taliban ikke skal føle seg for sikre i sine egne landområder. Alle vet at frontlinjene kan flytte seg hurtig og forpurre Talibans

vaklevorne fred. Mujahedin-soldatene som i løpet av 1980-årene fikk kastet Sovjet-soldatene ut av Afghanistan, har siden i interne kamper forvandlet Kabuls forsteder til de verste ruinhauget. Selv folk som har sett både Sarajevo og Beirut må gni seg i øynene.

Det er i disse omgivelsene at Talibans forbud strammes til. Drageflyging er straffbart og menns skjegg skal gro vilt og upleie. Hælene til kvinnene skal være lydløse, for å forhindre at mens lidenskap flammer opp...

Talibans gammel-tradisjonelle levevis presses ekstra hardt ned over Kabul, der folk har hatt bedre utdannelse og (for Taliban) har vært betenklig frilynte.

– Alt dette er bare en overgang. Det slutter jo ikke med Taliban. Men hva blir det neste? spør en bekymret ingeniør Mohammed Masood.

Jvlands-Posten/Bergens Tidende

Fra forsørger til tigger

De afghanske kvinner, der er frataget deres

arbejde, sutherford

Kristelig Dagblad
ANTHONY SHADD
skriver fra Kabul 30.9.-93

Lange rækker af kvinder, som krigen har gjort til enker, snor sig hver morgen ud af den afghanske hovedstads ødelagte hospitaler og skoler. De står i kø og venter på deres portion af den olie og de bønner, som hjelpeorganisationer deler ud, og som betyder overlevelse.

Maden uddeles fra distributionssentre og går til 11.000 enker, hvoraf mange har seks børn eller mere. De venter under grønne læremidtele, knuger deres legitimatisering i den hånd og deres slør i den anden.

Som et tegn på de stadig vanskeligere forhold har centrene i Kabul i år været nødt til at holde åbent både om sommeren og vinteren.

– Økonomien er i så dårlig forfatning at kvinderne ikke engang har råd til at købe et stykke brød hver dag, siger

Esther Robinson, der koordinerer fødevaraprojektet for CARE International.

Eneforsørgerne

Da den religiøse Taleban-milits overtok kontrollen over Kabul sidste år, forbød den kvinder at arbejde, og det kostede kvindelige ansatte i det offentlige, skoler og hospitaler deres jobs. Mange af kvinderne var ene om at forsørge deres familier.

Kvinder blev tvunget til at gå iklædt en »burqa«, som dækker dem fra top til tå. Det er ikke tilladt at bruge høje hæle eller kosmetik. Og mere end 70 pigeskoler blev lukket.

At tale med en fremmed mand straffes med tøv af unge fanatikere, som patruljerer i gaderne og håndhæver Taleban-s strenge fortolkning af islamisk lov. Adskillige afghanske kvinder afslog at lade sig interview til denne artikel.

Mange har ganske enkelt nok at gøre med at overleve.

Gaderne er i dag fyldte med flokke af tiggende kvinder i burqaer. Hjelpeorganisationer har forsøgt at starte projekter, hvor de har stået med propuide lagre af bluser

og tæpper, som ingen har råd til at købe.

Uden udsigt til socialhjælp vil det være nødvendigt at fortsætte den månedlige uddeling af olie (4,5 kilo) og bønner (12 kilo) i det uendelige.

– De har haft et hjem og fjernsyn og videoer og kakkelovne, og de har mistet det hele, siger Robinson.

– De har haft en livsstil, og nu er det hele blevet taget fra dem. (AP)

Fred, men ikke frihed

*Ro på overfladen
i Kabul et år efter
Talebans magt-
overtagelse*

ANTHONY SHADID

skriver fra Kabul

*Kabul 23. september 1997
Dagblad*

Hvis man ser bort fra turbanen, rosenkransen og det enorme skæg med et gråt strejf, kunne mullah Abbas lige så godt være en amerikansk politiker under en valgkampagne.

- Der er fred og ro. Der er sikker på gaderne, markdet, ja, i hele byen, siger Abbas, en af lederne af den afghanske religiøse Taleban-milits.

- Befolningen er sikker. Dens hjem er sikre.

Et år efter, at tusindvis af Taleban-soldater indtog den hærgede hovedstad, Kabul, er lov og orden det kriterium, som hærens ledere ønsker at blive bedømt efter. Men under det tynde fernis sikkerhed stilles der spørgsmålstegn ved, hvis lov der håndhæves, og omkostningerne ved den strenge orden.

Imens Taleban peger på, at befolkningen kan færdes på gaderne uden frygt for overfald, peger deres kritikere - i hvert fald dem der ikke er bange for at tage bladet fra munden - på tabet af andre typer frihed.

Frygten for at dø i krig har imidlertid bidraget til, at det er utroligt vanskeligt at opnå bare en minimal indtjening, så familierne kan købe »nan«, fladbrød, som er det vigtigste næringsmiddel i Afghanistan. Nøden er så stor, at selv færdselsbetjente tigger i vejkryds.

- Hvorfor skulle jeg ikke tigge? Min mave er tom, og jeg er sulten, siger Kalandar, en af de politibetjente, der som så mange afghanere kun bruger et navn.

Ruinby indtaget

Taleban gik ind i Kabul 26. september sidste år og mødte praktisk talt ingen modstand. Militisen indtog en by, som lå i ruiner på grund af magtkampe mellem forskellige grupper.

Da Taleban havde overtaget magten, lovede militislere at afvæbne grupperne, at etablere ro og orden og - vigtigst af alt - at indføre deres strenge version af islamisk lov.

Kvinder tæves, hvis de ikke er iklädt en »burqa«, som dækker hele kroppen. Høje hæle og kosmetik er forbudt. De fleste kvinder må ikke arbejde uden for hjemmet.

Mænd fik besked på at lade skægget vokse, som profeten Mohammed gjorde, hvis de vil undgå at blive pisket og en fængselsstraf på et par dage.

Derudover blev musik erklæret for forbudt område. Der hænger stadig blanke bånd revet ud af kassetter ned fra standere ved Talebans kontrolposter og vejkryds som en advarsel, der ikke er til at tage fejl af.

En kampagne mod korruption og kriminalitet skabte tilsyneladende orden i en by, hvor lovløsheden engang var så udpræget, at befolkningen ikke turde opbevare penge i hjemmet eller lukke op om aftenen.

- I hver eneste gade, på hver eneste trappe var der folk med Kalashnikov-geværer som sagde, at de var præsident, siger Abbas, medlem af det syv personer store råd, som nu regerer i hovedstaden.

- Alle sagde, at de var konge af Kabul.

Lovløsheden er forsvundet. Befolningen koncentrerer sig i dag om den omfattende fattigdom.

Behov for fødevarer

To tredjedele af byen er stadig ubeboelig, den ligner mere en arkæologisk udgravnings end en hovedstad. Gade efter gade er fyldt med murbrokker, der ligger op ad de mure, som endnu ikke er bræst sammen. Døråbningerne overgroat af ukrudt.

De bedst betalte jobs er dem, hjælpeorganisationerne tilbyder. At skovle murbrokker væk giver syv kilo mel om dager. Mere end halvdelen af byens befolkning på en million er afhængig af uddeeling af fødevarer.

- Da Taleban kom, sagde de, at de ville give os mad, at de ville give os arbejde, og at de ville give os løn, siger Mohammed, tæppehandler.

- Nu siger de: - Bed Gud om det.

Taleban nævner sjældent befolkningens trængsler i moskéerne og radioen. Deres budskab er moralsk, ikke økonomisk: Du må ikke stjæle. Du må ikke være utro. Lev som en god muslim.

Hvis man går Taleban-lederne på klingen, siger de, at der intet kan gøres ved økonomien, før krigen mod den genstridig oppositionsalliance, der hersker i den nordlige tredjedel af Afghanistan, er afsluttet.

- Når krigen er forbi, når der ikke længere bruges våben, kan pengene blive brugt på uddannelse, sundhed og andre ting, siger Sher Mohammed Abbas Stanakzai, viceudenrigsminister.

Taleban har brugt krigen til at retfærdiggøre en kampagne af arrestationer rettet mod byens tadsjikiske, usbekiske og hazaraske minoriteter. Taleban består hovedsageligt af pashtunere, den største etniske gruppe, der stammer fra det sydlige Afghanistan. Oppositionen i nord udgøres stort set af etniske minoriteter.

Hundreder er gennem de sidste to måneder blevet arresteret i Kabul, mistænkt for at hjælpe oppositionen. De fleste løslades efter få dage, sommetider efter at være blevet pisket.

- Selvfølgelig er jeg bekymret, siger Sultan, hazara og rishandler på Chandawali Marked i Kabul.

- De arresterer folk hver eneste dag. De siger, at det drejer sig om sikkerhed, men det gør det ikke. Det er, fordi jeg er den, jeg er.

Stanakzai fastholder, som andre Taleban-ledere, at hver eneste forordning, de udsteder, og hver eneste arrestation, de foretager, er del af hærens forsøg på at etablere lov og orden.

- Uden Taleban vil byen igen blive et mareridtsagtigt anarki, siger han.

- Vi er overbeviste om, at hvis vi forlod Kabul i morgen, vil de, der kommer tilbage til Kabul, ikke kun spille musik, de vil plyndre byen. De vil ødelægge byen. De vil ikke efterlade noget, siger han.

- Vi er her, for at de ikke skal få chancen. (AP)

Aflejningen 23. 8. 97

Egeland skriver brev til Taliban

Situasjonen i Kabul er forverret, fastslår statssekretær Jan Egeland. Nå sender han et personlig brev til Taleban's viseutenriksminister med krav om respekt for menneskerettighetene og oppfordrer på nytt til konkret samarbeid med internasjonale hjelpeorganisasjoner.

Jan Egeland besøkte selv Kabul 14. august. Da kom han med en klar trussel om at hvis forholdene ikke raskt ble bedret, ville han ikke kunne anbefale økt bistand til Afghanistan under den store givertandskonferansen som han selv skal lede i New York i september/oktober. Hans anbefalinger der vil tillegges stor vekt.

(NTB)

Abidullah tyder stormen

Borgerkrigen fortsætter i Afghanistan - der er ingen udsigt til, at den ophører

Kristeligt Dagblad

GRETCHEN PETERS

skriver fra Kabul

30/9-97

En Taleban-soldat ser Guds hånd i en voldsom sandstorm, der pisker sand gennem et udbombet herberg ved den nøgne front nord for Kabul.

- Gud er ikke glad for, at vi bliver ved med at kæmpe, siger Abidullah og tager et tørklæde om hovedet for at beskytte sig mod vindstøde, der har en kraft på op til 65 kilometer i timen.

- Han sendte denne storm for at straffe Afghanistans uheldige befolkning.

Det krigshærgede land har lidt under årtiers krig, og mange afghanere kan ikke se en ende på det.

Taleban-militisen kontrollerer to tredjedele af den sydlige del af landet og har til mål at gøre Afghanistan til en islamisk stat. Militisen kæmper ved mindst fire forskellige fronter mod en oppositionskoalition, som har base i nord.

Soldater som Abidullah befinner sig 25 kilometer nord for den afghanske hovedstad, hvor de kæmper mod styrker, der ledes af den tidligere forsvarsschef Ahmed Shah Massood. Det var hans regering, Taleban satte fra magten for et år siden.

Da krigeren Malik Pahlawan i maj drev den usbekiske krigsherre Rashid Dostum ud og inviterede den islamiske militis til den nordlige del af landet, som oppositionen kontrollerer, så det ud til, at Taleban var parat til at overtage kontrollen med hele landet.

Men de tidligere allierede i nord, som pludselig var blevet fjender, skiftede side igen, og Taleban var tvunget til at flygte fra den nordlige by Mazar-e-Sharif, efter at hundreder af deres soldater døde i gaderne under kampe, der brød ud lige så snart den islamiske militis ankom.

Vold og ustabilitet

Sådanne hurtige allianceskifte er standard i Afghanistan, hvor vold og ustabilitet går helt tilbage til dengang i 1800-tallet, da Storbritannien og Rusland kæmpede om kontrollen over strategiske handelsruter gennem landet.

Forskellige udenlandske styrker har gennem årene spillet Afghanistans enorme antal rivaliserende stammer og etniske grupper ud mod hinanden og skabt mange spændinger, der stadig splitter landet.

I 1979 invaderede og besatte den sovjetiske hær Afghanistan. Den fastholdt sit greb om landet i ti år, indtil den blev drevet ud af amerikansk støttede afghanske guerillaer, og de gensidigt ødelæggende slag blev genoptaget. Magtkampene har siden 1980erne kostet mere end 1,5 millioner afghanere livet.

I dag beskylder de nordlige ledere Pakistan - og ofte også USA - for at støtte den islamiske militis, som opstod for tre år siden i det sydlige Afghanistan for at skabe en stødpude mod Iran.

Kamp om nøgen jord

I mellemtiden går krigen sin ubarmhjertige gang.

Oppositionen er siden juli ikke kommet længere end til de kraftbevoksede bjerge i den nordlige udkant af Kabul, og her tordner raket- og artilleriild dag efter dag, imens sol-

dater kæmper om nøgne stykker jord, der for længst er blevet forladt af den civile befolkning.

Imens Abidullahs kammerater maser med at få en rusten russisk kampvogn, som stammer fra Sovjetunionens besættelse af landet, bragt i stilling, indrømmer soldaterne, at de fører krig for at befri Afghanistan for konflikter.

- Vi ønsker blot at drive fjenden tilbage, så der kan komme fred til den afghanske befolkning, siger kommandør Maulvi Hashami.

Men ingen af parterne befinner sig i en position, hvor de kan opnå en militær løsning.

Ifølge udenlandske hjælpearbejdere, som ønsker at være anonyme, er tusinder af Taleban-soldater blevet dræbt eller taget til fange i nord, og den islamiske militis kæmper for at holde oppositionen på afstand.

Samtidig er den løse koalition i nord blevet svækket af de nylige kampe, og den er langt fra stabil.

Gadekampe brød ud i Mazar-e-Sharif i august, efter

at Pahlawans tropper forsøgte at afvæbne de tropper, der stadig er loyale over for Dostum, som lever i eksil i Tyrkiet.

Medlemmer af den shiitiske hær Hezb-e-Wahadat kæmper også mod Pahlawan, som overgav en af dens topledere til Taleban, da den islamiske militis gik ind i den nordlige del af landet i maj.

Alliancen blev yderligere svækket, da et fragtfly med det nordlige Afghanistans nyudnævnte ministerpræsident Abdul Rahim Ghaforzai styrede ned og alle om bord blev dræbt.

Udnævnelsen af Ghaforzai kom efter ugers kævl mellom de nordlige ledere og nabolandet Iran, som støtter koalitionen mod Taleban.

Massoods talisman, kun kendt som Abdullah, siger, at Ghaforzais død betyder tabet af en mand, der forventedes at samle den svage alliance i nord.

Han siger, at det bliver svært at finde en efterfølger.

Situationen på slagmarken er fuldstændig fastlåst, og

FNs og Pakistans forsøg på at opnå en fredsaftale ved forhandlingsbordet er også slæbet i fej.

- Vi har gennemlevet 20 års krig og 20 års forhandlinger, siger Talebans magtfulde sundhedsminister, mullah Mohammed Abbas Akhund.

- Ingen af delene har virket. (AP)

Taliban-ja til norsk-støttede jenteskoler

Kirkens Nødhjelp er i gang med å gjenreise ti skoler i Afghanistan etter at Taliban gikk med på at halvparten av elevplassene blir forbeholdt jenter.

I august møtte statssekretær Jan Egeland Afghanistans visestuenriksminister i Kabul, og drøftet blandt annet muligheten for gjenoppbygging av ti skoler. Han gjorde det klart at et absolutt vilkår for norsk støtte var at halvparten av skolene skal være forbeholdt jenter.

Byggingen er nå godt i gang, og det er Kirkens Nødhjelp som har ansvaret for å følge opp i forhold til afghanske myndigheter.

Den første testen på om Taliban ville føye seg, var om de ville snakke med Kirkens Nødhjelps kvinnelige representant om skoleprosjektet. Dette har gått uten problemer, sier konsulent Harriet Berg ved Jan Egelands kontor.

Taliban-bevegelsen har stengt jenteskoler og arbeidsplasser for kvinder siden de tok makten i Kabul for et års tid siden. Kvinder skal holde seg hjemme, og være helt tilslørt når de må utenfor huset, da helst i følge med en manlig slekting. 7. november møtes Afghanistans giverland i New York. Jan Egeland skal lede møtet, og hans råd vil bli tillagt stor vekt av andre bistandsland.

Norge har allerede sagt klart fra om at forholdene for kvinder og arbeidsvilkårene for internasjonale hjelpeorganisasjoner må bli bedre. Hvis ikke vil Norge ikke råde andre land til å gi støtte utover ren humanitær bistand.

NTB

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Dostum ist wieder da

Im Norden Afghanistans überstürzen sich die Ereignisse / Von Klaus Natorp

In Afghanistan haben sich die Ereignisse in den letzten Monaten so sehr überstürzt, daß sie von den Nachrichtenagenturen kaum noch verzeichnet wurden. Die Lage wurde immer verworren. Im Mai erst mußte der Herrscher des Nordens, der lange Zeit als nahezu unangreifbar geltende Usbek-General Dostum, aus seiner Hochburg Mazar-i-Sharif flüchten und im Ausland um politisches Asyl bitten. Jetzt ist er wieder zurückgekehrt. Wie war das möglich?

Aus Berichten von Mitarbeitern der in Mazar-i-Sharif tätigen humanitären Hilfsorganisationen wissen wir inzwischen, daß Dostum die Heterogenität seiner Jombesch-Partei zum Verhängnis geworden war. Ihr Bündnis mit der das zentralafghanische Hochplateau des Hazarajat kontrollierenden, von Iran unterstützten schiitischen Hezb-e-Wahdat garantierte Mazar-i-Sharif lange Zeit eine gewisse Stabilität. Einen seiner stärksten Milizenführer in der Provinz Badghis namens Palavan Rasul, den Leute, die ihn kennengelernt haben, als einen Großgrundbesitzer von uralem Schrot und Korn bezeichneten, konnte Dostum jedoch nie ganz unter Kontrolle bringen. Rasul hatte auch Truppen in Mazar stationiert. Er soll seine Machtposition dazu benutzt haben, sich hemmungslos zu bereichern. Übergriffe, die er und seine Leute sich leisteten, wurden nicht geahndet.

Dostum konnte sich innere Auseinandersetzungen nicht leisten. Rassuls jüngerer Bruder Malik wurde mit dem Posten des „Außenministers von Nordafghanistan“ abgefunden, andere Gefolgsleute Rassuls mit Pfunden an der Universität bedacht. Im Frühjahr 1996 wurde der unkalkulierbare Bundesgenosse bei einem Attentat getötet. Als das geschah, war Malik im Ausland. In Mazar-i-Sharif attmete man zunächst auf, weil sich die Sicherheitslage verbesserte, doch war andererseits vorauszusehen, daß die Familie des ermordeten Rasul auf Rache sinnen würde. Dostum war nach der Eroberung Kabuls durch die Taliban ein Zweckbündnis mit den aus der Hauptstadt vertriebenen Kräften des vormaligen „Präsidenten“ Rabbani und seines Verteidigungsministers Ahmed Shah Massud eingegangen, die er bis dahin erbittert bekämpft hatte. Auch die Reste der Hezb-i-Islami-ye des einst von Pakistan am meisten unterstützten Mudschahein-Führers Gulbuddin Hekmatyar stießen zu dieser merkwürdigen Koalition.

Doch die Allianz hielt nicht, was sie rein zahlenmäßig zu versprechen schien, weil Malik sich nach dem gewaltsamen Tode eines weiteren Mitglieds seiner Sippe mit seinem Milizen den Taliban anschloß. Dostums Truppen wurden überrumpt, ihr Befehlshaber mußte fliehen. Maliks Anhänger ermöglichten den Taliban die kampflose Einnahme von Mazar-i-Sharif. Dort begannen diese sogleich jene „islamischen Neuerungen“ einzuführen, mit denen sie vorher schon in einigen anderen von ihnen eroberten Gebieten Afghanistans viele ihrer Landsleute, vor allem Frauen, gegen sich aufgebracht hatten. Außerdem wollten die Taliban Maliks Milizen entwaffen, und statt eines wirklich „bedeutenden Postens“, den sie Malik für den Fall seines Frontwechsels versprochen hatten, boten sie ihm nun bloß das Amt eines stellvertretenden Außenministers an. Als die Taliban schließlich auch noch in die Viertel der Schiiten einrückten und nach Führern der mit ihnen verfeindeten Hezb-e-Wahdat zu fahnden begannen, brach jener Aufstand los,

älteren Bruders, des erstgeborenen Rasul. Überdies war er nach seinem Frontwechsel diskreditiert. Die Anhänger Dostums in der Jombesch-Partei warteten nur darauf, daß er sich eine Blöße gebe. In der benachbarten ehemaligen Sowjetrepublik Usbekistan hielt man jedenfalls nach wie vor zu Dostum und weigerte sich, mit Malik auch nur zu sprechen. Alle Grenzübergänge wurden geschlossen. Man sei erst bereit, sie wieder zu öffnen, wenn Rabbani die Macht übergeben werde. Das führte zu neuen Spannungen in der zerbrechlichen „Koalition des Nordens“.

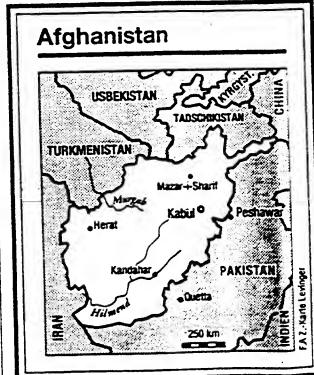
Massud hatte unterdessen verhindert, daß die Taliban von Kabul aus Verstärkungen nach Norden bringen konnten. Aus Pul-i-Khumri mußten sich die Taliban unter Verlusten wieder zurückziehen. Die Übriggebliebenen tauchten allerdings später weiter im Norden im Gebiet zweier Kommandeure von Hekmatyars Hezb-i-Islami-ye wieder auf, wobei unklar blieb, ob sie sich dort als Gäste aufhielten oder Gefangene waren. Man ließ sie nahezu unbehindert in Richtung Taloqan weiterziehen. Die überwiegend paschtunischen Taliban können bei den Paschutnen im Norden, wo es nur wenige Paschutnen gibt, in der Regel mit deren Solidarität rechnen, während sich in den paschutschen Kernprovinzen Afghanistans die Stämme oft scharf gegeneinander abgrenzen. Paschutnen gibt es in Nordafghanistan erst seit dem vergangenen Jahrhundert, als der damalige Emir Angehörige unbotmäßiger Stämme Ostafghanistans nach deren Niederwerfung in Nordafghanistan unter Usbeke und Tadschiken ansiedelte, um die unterworfenen Ostvölker zu schwächen und gleichzeitig die Nordvölker besser kontrollieren zu können. Während die Taliban sonst oft nur als „Fremde aus Kandahar“ angesehen werden, wo die meisten von ihnen herkommen, gelten sie bei den nordafghanischen Diaspora-Paschutnen als Leute, denen man unter allen Umständen helfen müsse.

Nur so wird verständlich, warum es den versprengten Taliban im Norden Afghanistans immer wieder gelang, sich durchzuschlagen und sogar neue militärische Erfolge zu erringen. Außer Massud und der Hezb-e-Wahdat blieben die übrigen Mitglieder der Anti-Taliban-Allianz in Mazar-i-Sharif zudem militärisch weitgehend inaktiv. Jombesch-Truppen konnten nicht einmal das neuerliche Eindringen der Taliban in Maliks Heimatprovinz

Badges verhindern. Nachdem Hekmatyars Interessen in der mühsam zusammengezimmerten Regierung in Mazar nicht angemessen berücksichtigt worden waren, schlossen mehrere seiner Kommandanten Bündnisse mit den Taliban, überwältigten einen Jombesch-Stützpunkt nach dem anderen und näherten sich zusammen mit den Taliban aufs neue Mazar. In der Jombesch-Partei kam es daraufhin zu Auseinandersetzungen wegen der Unfähigkeit Maliks. Schließlich mußte Malik fliehen, Dostum kehrte nach Mazar-i-Sharif zurück, der Angriff der Taliban auf die Stadt wurde abgewehrt.

Wie diese neueste Überraschung zu stande kam, ist noch nicht in allen Einzelheiten bekannt. Wahrscheinlich ist diese Wende auch noch nicht die letzte in den anscheinend endlosen afghanischen Wirren. Im Osten war es wohl wieder einmal dem legendären „Löwen vom Panjshir-Tal“ Massud zu verdanken, daß er die Lage im Raum von Kunduz stabilisieren konnte. In Mazar dagegen sollen die Hazara von Hezb-e-Wahdat die Hauptlast des Abwehrkampfes gegen die Taliban getragen haben. Dostum kehrte angeblich auf Wunsch von Rabbani, Massud, Khalili (Chef der Hezb-e-Wahdat) und aller übrigen Verbündeten zurück. Malik hält sich vermutlich irgendwo bei den Resten seiner noch zu ihm haltenden Anhänger auf. Merkwürdigerweise hat Dostum nach seiner Rückkehr gesagt, Malik könne dort bleiben, wo er von der Bevölkerung akzeptiert werde. Er will sich also offenbar Zeit lassen mit der Kaltstellung dieses Widersachers.

Aber auch Dostums Stellung ist prekär. Einst war er die Hauptstütze des letzten kommunistischen Staats- und Parteichefs Najibullah in Kabul. Erst Dostums Verrat und Frontwechsel besiegelten Najibullahs Schicksal. Danach hat der schnauzbärtige Usbeke noch mehrere Male die Allianzen gewechselt. Seine Flucht im Mai hat ihn den Ruf der Unbesiegbarkeit gekostet. Ob er seine alte Machtbasis je wiederaufbauen kann, ist zweifelhaft. Ohnehin wird sein Einfluß als Usbeke immer auf den Norden Afghanistans beschränkt bleiben. Das Mehrheitsvolk der Paschutnen sucht weiter nach einem angesehenen, fähigen Führer, dem es gelingt, den in zahlreiche Kleine reiche zerfallenen Staat zumindest in loser Ordnung zusammenzuhalten und ihm nach fast zwei Jahrzehnten der Selbstzerfleischung endlich Frieden zu schenken.



der die Taliban wieder aus Mazar und darüber hinaus aus weiten Teilen Nordafghanistans vertrieben.

Nun war Malik plötzlich der neue Herr der Jombesch-Partei in Mazar, obwohl zu bezweifeln ist, daß er den Aufstand anordnete oder gar befehligte. Dazu ist Malik eine zu schwache Führungsfigur. Wahrscheinlich hat er nie damit gerechnet, einmal an der Spitze seines Clans zu stehen, dem angestammten Platz seines

Die afghanischen Herrscher werden Opfer ihres Spiels mit dem eigenen Volk

her Festung Dostums und Naddehür in den Norden, überwinden konnten, nahmen sie Poldi-Khomri ein, die zweitgrößte Stadt des Nordreiches, 80 Kilometer nördlich des Ssanglang-Tunnels gelegen. Von hier wurden sie in den Nordosten vertrieben, in die Stadt Kunduz an der tsadischen Grenze, die seit drei Monaten fest in ihrer Hand ist. Von diesem Wiedersandnest aus starteten sie in immer neue Angiffswellen gegen die Nordallianz. Mitte September besetzten die Taliban wichtige strategische Gebiete vor Mazar-e-Sharif und die afghanisch-usbekische Grenzstadt Hayratan. Dort stießen sie den wieder vereinten Kräften Maliks und Dostums gegenüber. Im Gegenzug versucht Ahmad Schah Masud, der Nordallianz Luft zu verschaffen, indem er Kabul belagert.

Die einst klare Front zwischen Nord und Süd gibt es kaum mehr. Der Norden ist zu einem politischen und militärischen Flikkenkampf geworden. Mit seinem Putsch hat Malik den Taliban und Tor gefallen. Jetzt versuchen sie, die noch nicht von ihnen beherrschten Landesteile von innen heraus zu destabilisieren.

Afghanistan und seine Völker sind Spielball ihrer Herrschenden. Doch die afghanischen Wendekräfte sind seit jeher geschickt darin, der Weltöffentlichkeit Stand in die Augen zu steuern: Zu Zeiten der sowjetischen Besetzung hatten sich zahlreiche Rauschguthändler und Waffenschiebler als Mudschahidin präsentiert, internationale Gelder in die eigenen Taschen gesteckt und waren zu politischen Führern aufgestiegen. Mitte August stellte Malik seine persönlichen Klienten als neues afghanisches Kabinett von Technokraten vor – darunter den in Iran zum Tode verurteilten dreifachen Mörder Ghafar Pahlevan, einen analphabetischen Ustebekkommandanten. „Ich weiß nicht, warum sie mich zum Tode verurteilt haben. Ich habe nur drei Leuten die Kehle erstaunst.“ So Ghafar Pahlevan zufielte, erstaunt. Ein Jahr lang saß er in Teheran im berüchtigten Ghassar-Gefängnis in der Todeszelle. Im Gefolge der islamischen Revolution in Iran (Februar 1979) konnte er fliehen, als die Bevölkerung die Gefängnisse stürmte, um die politischen Häftlinge zu befreien. In Afghanistan stellte er eine usbekische Miliztruppe auf, die wenig zimperlich im Umgang mit der Zivilbevölkerung war. In kurzer Zeit häufte er durch Raub und Plunderung große Reichtümer an und baute eine Flotte von Tanklastwagen auf, mit denen er die Erdölfelder in seinem Gebiet um Sar-e-Pol, im Nordwesten des Landes, ausbeutete wie seinen Privatbesitz. Er stellte sich hinter den postenenden Malik und verdiente sich so den Posten des Vizepräsidenten unter Rabbani.

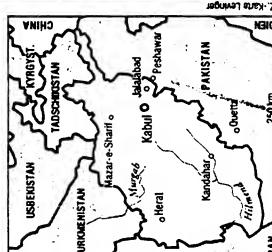
über zehn Milliarden Dollar soll Zentralasien mit dem Indischen Ozean verbinden. Zwei Ölgiiganten, die argentinische Bridas und die amerikanische Unocal, liefern sich heftige Auseinandersetzungen um den Bau dieser Pipeline durch Afghanistan. Der Streit der zwei Örliesen hat die politischen und die militärischen Interessen in Afghanistan beeinflusst. Wir hatten uns mit Bridas bereits über das Pipeline-Projekt verständigt, um die Konzession zu erlangen", erklärt Präsident Rabbani. So sei es gekommen, daß Unocal die Talibans vor seinen Kätern gespannt habe. "Afghanistan ist zum Opfer der Ölgiiganten geworden", resümier Rabbani.

Zwei Nachbarländer, Iran und Pakistan, tragen also ihre Auseinandersetzung um Macht und Einfluß in der Region auf afghanisches Boden aus: Vom Norden her

hinnnehmen. Wird andererseits die Pipeline durch Iran gebaut, würde Irans Einfluss in der Region und in Zentralasien ins Unermeßliche wachsen.

Die zentralasiatischen Republiken zeigen Afghanistan seit dem Umsturz im Norden die kalte Schulter: Am 29. August äußerte der kasachische Präsident Nursultan Njasow die sicherste und kürzeste Weg für eine Pipeline. Selbst wenn die Vereinigten Staaten dies nicht mittragen würden, würden die Lander Zentralasiens hin bevorzugen. Die einzige offene Grenzverbindung Nordafghanistans nach Zentralasien verlief bisher über Turkmenistan. Mit dem Auftaunnen neuer Kämpfe Ende September hat jedoch auch der türkmenische Präsident Njasow die Transitstrecke nach Afghanistan dichtgemacht. Usbekistan hatte schon Ende Mai seine Grenzen nach Afghanistan geschlossen. Die sogenannte Freundschaftsbrücke, die noch zu Breschnew Zeiten zwischen der damaligen Sowjetunion und dem Nachbarland gebaut worden war, wird von zwei Containern blockiert. Zu Recht sieht Usbekistan die Gefahr, daß der afghanische "Heilige Krieg" in die zentralasiatischen Republiken getragen wird. Auch die Versicherungen Präsident Rabbanis Nordafghanistans sei ein "Schutzwall gegen die Taliban" und ihre Bestrebungen, Samarkand und Buchara als islamische Zentren nach Afghanistan "hinzuziehen", können die jungen Republiken nicht beruhigen. War es doch gerade Rabban gewesen, der vor dem Anfang der Taliban "befriedet" Afghanistan war nach der Machtherrschaft der Amerikaner war noch der Machtherrnstaat der Madschahedin im April 1992 ausgezeichnet gewesen, daß sie in Afghanistan den Ton angeben würden, wie die Vereinigten Staaten während der sozialistischen Besatzung den Lovenstein der militärischen und finanziellen Unterstützung für die Madschahedin aufgebracht hatten. So setzte man auch voraus, daß die amerikanische Ölfirmen die Konzession erhalten würde. Selbst das State Department hat durch die Badachschan und Kunduz, Tausende von

Afghanistan



Algerien, Studi-Arabisen, Marokko und den Emiraten. Besonders das sozialistische Algerien und Sadsat Agypten waren nun froh darüber, ein Ventil für die überschüssigen Kräfte ihrer eigenen Islamisten gefunden zu haben. Doch wieder wird man die Geister, die man gerufen hat, nicht mehr los. Was heim in Algerien und Agypten geschieht, ist das Werk der im Afghanistan Krieg hochgezüchteten religiösen Terroristen. Und immer noch scheinen viele Regierungen der islamischen Welt ihre Fundamentalisten in Afghanistan zu "entsorgen".

Die Welt hat die Afghanen im Krieg mißbraucht und ihnen tödliche Waffen in die Hand gegeben. Die Sowjets und ihre Sattel pumpen Sad-Raketen und MiG-Bomber nach Afghanistan. Der Westen rüstete seine Klientel, die Mudscha, heim, mit modernster Kriegstechnik aus und jubelte sie zu "islamischen Befreiern". Doch das, was da aus dem Kontrollen war, ließ sich nicht mehr kontrollieren. Von Kabul aus schwappte der islamische Terror über Kairo und Alger zu nach Paris. Heute will die Welt von Afghanistan nichts mehr wissen, aber Afghanistan wird eins immer wieder einholen. Der Geist, der einmal aus der Flasche entwichen ist, ist zu einem Monstern geworden. Jetzt nennt man es "Koranschüler" und instrumentalisiert es für wirtschaftliche Interessen.

Zwanzig Jahre Krieg haben das Land bis zur Unkenntlichkeit entstellt. Aus dem Munde der afghanischen Lyrikerin Shafiqe Jargi klingt das so: „Dieses Land, in dem der Engel dem Teufel zu Willen sein müssen, dieses Land, wo der Mensch Sklav und Satan König ist, dieses Gräberfeld ist nicht mein Land.“

Der Autor ist freier Journalist in Köln

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zuständige Staatsministerin, Frau Robin tadschikischen Islamisten militärisch aus-

Raphael verhauen lassen, die Interessen von Uncleo seien identisch mit den nationalen Interessen der Vereinigten Staaten, und mache kein Hehl aus seiner Sympathie für die Taliban. Noch Anfang Mai, wenige Tage vor Dostums Sturz, hatte eine amerikanische Delegation bei dem General vorgesprochen und ihm die Zusammenarbeit mit Iran vorgeworfen. Die Taliban beherrschten schließlich über zwei Drittel Af-

ghanistan, so ihr mit unvermeidlichem Druck vorgetriebenes Argument, wie könne sich Dostum unterstellen, ihnen die Herrschaft streitig zu machen.

Afghanistan dürfte noch auf absehbare Zeit Schachbrettfeld ausländischer Interessen bleiben: Venient Pakistan seinen Einfluss in Afghanistan, versiegten zwei Lebensaderen: die Handelswege nach Zentralasien und das Pipeline-Projekt. Zudem wird das Land in Zukunft die Geister, die es selbst gerufen hat – die Taliban – nicht wieder loswerden. Iran kann sich ebenfalls nicht leisten, die Finger vom Nachbarland zu lassen: Einen starken „amerikanischen“, antirussischen Einfluss an seiner Grenze will Teheran nicht hinnehmen. Wird andererseits die Pipeline durch Iran gebaut, würde Irans Einfluss in der Region und in Zentralasien ins Unermeidliche wachsen.

Die zentralasiatischen Republiken zeigen Afghanistan seit dem Umsturz im Norden die kalte Schulter. Am 29. August äußerte der kasachische Präsident Nasarbajew, die seit der sicheren und kürzesten Weg für eine Pipeline. Selbst wenn die Vereinigten Staaten dies nicht mittragen würden die Länder Zentralasiens Iran bevorzugen. Die einzige offene Grenzverbindung Nordafghanistans nach Zentralasien verlief bisher über Turkmenistan. Mit dem Aufflammen neuer Kämpfe Ende September hat jedoch auch der türkmenische Präsident Niyazov die Transstrikte nach Afghanistan dichtgemacht. Usbekistan hatte schon Ende Mai seine Grenzen nach Afghanistan geschlossen. Die sogenannte Freundschaftsbrücke, die noch zu Breschnews Zeiten zwischen der damaligen Sowjetunion und dem Nachbarland gebaut worden war, wird von zwei Containern blockiert. Zu Recht sieht Usbekistan die Gefahr, daß der afghanische „Heilige Krieg“ in die zentralasiatischen Republiken getragen wird. Auch die Verschüttungen Präsident Rabbnis, Nordafghanistans sei ein „Schutzwall gegen die Taliban“ und ihre „Bestrebungen, Samarkand und Buchara als islamistische Zentren nach Afghanistan „hineinzuholen“, können die jungen Republiken nicht beruhigen. War es doch gerade Rabbbani gewesen, der vor zwei Jahren, als er noch im Arch in Kabul fest in Saitel saß, vernehmlich von einem „Groß-Tadschikismus“ geträumt hatte, das große Teile Nordafghanistans und die GUS-Rep. publik Tadschikistan umfassen sollte. Rabbbani hat wohl vergessen, daß er selbst im Nordosten des Landes, in den Provinzen Badachschan und Kunduz, Tausende von Grunde sind es ausländische Kräfte, die den Krieg gegen uns forsetzen“, mag Prääsident Rabbbani. „Unter den „Heiligen Krieg“ geworden. „Wir haben bei den Taliban viele Araber gefangen genommen. Im Ausland befinden sich auch Soldner aus Bangladesch und dem Jemen.“ Heute will Rabbbani nichts mehr davon wissen, daß auch unter seine Agide als Madschale die Führer im pakistansischen Exil so waren, daß durch sie die sowjetische Besetzung geführt wurde. Im Krieg gegen die sowjetische Besetzung hatten die „Madschale“ mehr als 40.000 Araber aufgestellt: Rekrutten aus Ägypten, Algerien, Saudi-Arabien, Marokko und den Emiraten. Besonders das sozialistische Algerien und Sadsat Ägypten waren nun froh darüber, ein Ventil für die überschüssigen Käffte ihrer eigenen Islamisten gefunden zu haben. Doch wieder wird man die Geister, die man gerufen hat, nicht mehr los. Was heute in Algerien und Ägypten geschieht, ist das Werk der im Afghanistan Krieg hochgezüchteten religiösen Terrorgruppen. Und immer noch scheinen viele Regierungen der islamischen Welt ihre Fundamente in Afghanistan zu „entsorgen“.

Die Welt hat die Afghanen im Käther Krieg mißbraucht und ihnen tödliche Waffen in die Hand gegeben. Die Sowjets und ihre Sattel plumpen Sad-Raketen und die MiG-Bomber nach Afghanistan. Der Welt Spitzie rüstete seine Klienten, die Madschale, heil moderner Kriegstechnik aus und jubelte sie zu „islamischen Befreiern“ hoch. Doch das, was da aus dem Ei gekrochen war, ließ sich nicht mehr kontrollieren. Von Kabul aus schwappte der islamische Terror über Kairo und Alger bis nach Teheran. Heute will die Welt von Afghanistan nichts mehr wissen, aber Afghanistan wird uns immer wieder einholen. Der Geist, der einmal aus der Flasche entwichen ist, ist zu einem Monstern geworden. Jetzt nennt man es „Koranschüler“ und instrumentalisiert es für wirtschaftliche Interessen.

Zwanzig Jahre Krieg haben das Land bis zur Unkenntlichkeit entstellt. Aus dem Munde der afghanischen Lyrikerin Shaufige Jaren klingt das so: „Dieses Land, in dem die Engel dem Teufel zu Willen sein müssen, dieses Land, wo der Mensch Sklav und Satan König ist, dieses Gräberfeld ist nicht mein Land.“

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Der Autor ist freier Journalist in Köln

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radschikischen Islamisten militärisch ausgebildeten und in das Nachbarland einschleichen ließ. Rußland spekulierte unverdrossen daran, daß Zentralasien durch die Talibankontrolle stabilisiert wird und sich dann die „Islamische Republik“ unter dem Schutz Moskaus stellen könnten. Immerhin verloren auch gegenwärtig die Grenzen Zentralasiens nach Afghanistan noch von russischem Militär geschützt. Dann wären die im immensen Turdörfekommen Zentralasiens wieder fest in russischer Hand.

Afghanistan ist heute zu einem internationalem Kriegsfeeld für den „Heiligen Krieg“ geworden. „Wir haben bei den Taliban“ an viele Araber gefangen genommen. Im Grunde sind es ausländische Kräfte, die die „Islamische Republik“ errichten. „Unter den gefangenen ausländern befinden sich auch Soldaten aus Bangladesch und dem Jemen.“ Heute willi g die Rebellen auch unter seine Aegide als Madschahidin-Führer im pakistanschen Exil so wieder fest in der sovjetischen Besatzungsmacht die Madschahidein mehr als 40 000 Araber aufzustellen. Rekruten aus Ägypten, Saudi-Arabien, Marokko und den Emiraten. Besonders das sozialistische Ägypten und Sads Ägypten waren nun im Krieg gegen die sovjetische Regierung in Afghanistan gefangen. „Wir haben in der Welt“ Fundamente der islamischen Welt“ eingesetzt“ Die Welt hat die Afghane n im Kälterkrieg mißbraucht und ihnen tödliche Waffen in die Hand gegeben. Die Sowjet und ihre Verbündeten sind es, die die islamischen Satelliten pumpen Scud-Raketen und Atomwaffen in Afghanistan zu „entlosen“ Die Welt hat die Afghane n im Kälterkrieg mißbraucht und ihnen tödliche Waffen in die Hand gegeben. Die Sowjet und ihre Verbündeten sind es, die die islamischen Satelliten pumpen Scud-Raketen und Atomwaffen in Afghanistan zu „entlosen“. Von Kabul aus schwampte der islamische Terror über Kairo und Alger bis nach Paris. Heute läßt die Welt von Afghanistan nichts mehr wissen, aber Afghanistan wird uns immer wieder einholen. Der Geist, der in einem Monsternester geworden, jetzt neint man „instrumentalisierung“ für wirtschaftliche Interessen. Zwan zig Jahre Krieg haben das Land bis zur Unkenntlichkeit entstellt. Aus dem Munde der afghanischen Lyriker Shah Jargina klingt das so: „Dieses Land, in dem die Engel dem Teufel zu Willen sein müssen, dieses Land, wo der Mensch Skala und Satan König ist, dieses Gräberfeld ist nicht mein Land.“ *

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F.A.Z. 2.10.97
Geplündert

Afghanistans Kunst-Erbe in Gefahr

**Taliban bestätigen Verlust
Taschkargans**

KABUL, 13. Oktober (AP). Nach schweren Gefechten haben sich die Kämpfer der radikalislamischen Taliban-Milizen aus der strategisch wichtigen Stadt Taschkargan im Norden Afghanistans zurückgezogen, wie das Informationsministerium am Montag in Kabul bestätigte. Ein Sprecher der gegen die Taliban kämpfenden Koalition teilte mit, östlich der Stadt gebe es in der Provinz Samaghan weiter Gefechte. Nach der Eroberung von Taschkargan haben die Taliban-Gegner nun die wichtigste Straße zu ihrer Hochburg Mazar-i-Scharif unter Kontrolle und können Truppen und Waffen freier bewegen. Noch im vergangenen Monat hatten die Taliban Mazar-i-Scharif fast eingeschlossen und standen kurz vor der Eroberung der Stadt. Seitdem konnten ihre Gegner wieder mehrere Gebiete zurückerobern.

F.A.Z. 14.10.97

Den Kunstschatzen Afghanistans droht die Vernichtung. In einem Plädoyer an alle Staaten hat deshalb der Generaldirektor der Unesco, Federico Mayor, dazu aufgerufen, sich bei den Bürgerkriegsparteien für den Schutz der letzten noch intakten Kulturgüter einzusetzen. Längst sind die Museen geplündert, die Bestände wurden in alle Winde zerstreut oder gar zerstört, weil ihr Wert nicht zu erkennen war. Nun sind durch die radikale Islamisierungspolitik der Taliban-Milizen auch die bislang noch unangetasteten architektonischen Zeugnisse der buddhistischen Vergangenheit des Landes gefährdet, unter anderem die aus dem vierten Jahrhundert stammende größte stehende Buddhasstatue der Welt im Bamiyan-Tal, 150 Kilometer nördlich von Kabul. Ein Kommandeur der Taliban hatte im Frühjahr angekündigt, dieses Relikt einer nichtislamischen Religion müßte beseitigt werden. Nur die Truppen der usbekischen Minorität Afghanistans schützen den fünfzig Meter hohen Giganten noch vor seinem Ende. F.A.Z.

F.A.Z. 21.8.97
**Taliban verbieten
Rauschgifthandel**

ISLAMABAD, 20. August (AP). Die Taliban-Miliz hat nach Radioberichten in den von ihr kontrollierten Gebieten Afghanistans den Gebrauch von Rauschgift und den Handel damit untersagt. Von einem Anbauverbot war jedoch nicht die Rede. Die Mitteilung, die dem Milizienführer Omar zugeschrieben wurde, könnte eine Reaktion auf die wachsende internationale Kritik am afghanischen Drogenhandel sein. Die Vereinten Nationen hatten mitgeteilt, Afghanistan sei nach Burma der größte Produzent von Opium. Der Gebrauch von Haschisch sei weit verbreitet. Die Taliban hatten bisher darauf hingewiesen, nicht über ausreichende Mittel zur Bekämpfung des Handels mit Rauschgift zu verfügen. Auch seien viele mittellose Bauern auf den Anbau von Mohn und Cannabispflanzen angewiesen. Der Handel mit Opium hat seit der Herrschaft der Taliban zugenommen.

Taliban ousts bank that lends to women

Financial Times
By Kasma Naja in Dhaka
16/9 - 97

Bangladesh's Grameen Bank, a global pioneer of the concept of small-business loans to poor women, has been forced out of Afghanistan after falling out with the Taliban militia, which controls most of the war-torn country.

The break came after the Taliban, known for its very strict interpretation of Islam, repeatedly raised objections and accused the bank of "promoting shamelessness among Afghan women".

Professor Mohammed Yunus, managing director of the Grameen Bank, said: "The idea was to set up an office and work with men at first and eventually employ women who would then lend to women."

The Grameen Bank's work has been replicated in more than 50 countries around the world where nearly 8m poor families have been provided with loans to start up their own businesses.

However, it was a highly ambitious project in the areas of Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban where women are not allowed out of the house unaccompanied and where girls schools were closed in the name of Islamic modesty.

The Taliban first stopped the bank from getting on with its work a few months ago when they said they had reports that Grameen Bank had encouraged many of its customers in Bangladesh to turn to Christianity. However the work was allowed to continue once a three-member delegation of Taliban leaders visited Bangladesh to check the reports for itself.

"But a month later, they raised another objection. They said they had heard that 70,000 Bangladeshi women had divorced their husbands as a result of their association with the bank. At this point I told my representative to pack his bag and come back, as we could not work under these conditions," said Prof Yunus.

Afghanistan

Drugs and Islamic law

Economist 6/9-97

THE United Nations may be getting somewhere in its bid to stamp out heroin production in Afghanistan. On August 20th, the country's Sharia radio station announced that the Taliban, the Islamic revivalist movement which controls much of the south and west—where most of the heroin is produced—had banned the production, sale and taking of both heroin and hashish. The government in Kabul has not yet confirmed the report, and the wording is ambiguous: it says the production of heroin is forbidden, but not the cultivation of the opium poppy, from which the heroin is extracted. However, the report seems at least to be a positive response to the UN International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), which has been urging the Taliban to impose a ban.

Afghanistan and Myanmar are the world's largest producers of opium. The UNDCP reckons that last year Afghanistan produced 2,250 tonnes of raw opium, from which 110 tonnes of heroin could be made. It is Europe's biggest source: police estimate that 80% of heroin taken in Europe originates in Afghanistan.

The UNDCP has been trying to put a stop to Afghan heroin production for years, and saw the Taliban's rise to power as an opportunity. The deposed government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani had endorsed UN conventions forbidding production, but did not have enough control to enforce them. Taliban rule is strict. The UNDCP assumed that Islamic *sharia* law outlaws the production of drugs such as heroin. But *sharia* law relies on interpretation, and the UNDCP has had to enlist the help of Islamic scholars to make its case. The Taliban, however, insists that it alone has the authority to interpret the law—and so far it has made no clear ruling on heroin.

In the past the Taliban has taken the view that a ban on growing opium would impoverish Afghan farmers. But the UNDCP claims that fruit crops would be more profitable, and is prepared to give the farmers money to improve fruit growing and marketing. Heroin smugglers give the farmers credit on opium two to three months before the crop is ready. The UNDCP thinks it may have to offer a similar deal on fruit. But first it will have to secure a genuine ban.

Mullah Mohammed Hasan, the governor of the Taliban-controlled city of Kandahar in southern Afghanistan told a Pakistani publication that the Taliban's own intelligence bureau had ascertained that the bank was in fact an economic wing of Christian missionary movements.

He said the Christian population of Bangladesh had increased significantly in the past 25 years since the bank started its work. "The motive of the bank was to lead Moslems away from Islam and promote shamelessness among women," he said.

He also criticised Grameen Bank's policy of charging interest – something which is not allowed under Islam.

An opportunist returns

Economist
TERMEZ 27/9-97

A BRIDGE nearly a kilometre long not far from Termez links Afghanistan with Uzbekistan across the Oxus (or the Amu-Darya, as it came to be called when the Soviet Union ruled this region). This week two Uzbek soldiers crossed the bridge to talk to the Taliban, the army of Islamic purists who now control about two-thirds of Afghanistan. It was not a particularly cordial encounter. The Uzbeks have been

watching with some anxiety the progress of the Taliban northwards, fearing that the fervour of their soldiers might ignite Islamic feeling in Uzbekistan. Now that the Taliban were at the border, the Uzbeks felt it was proper at least to acknowledge their presence and hope that they would keep to their promise not to interfere in neighbouring countries.

Although the Taliban have advanced a little, capturing Hayretan, just south of the border, last week, their hoped-for prize in the north, Mazar-i-Sharif, still eludes them. Mazar was the headquarters of Abdul Rashid Dostam, who once controlled a large slab of the north. In May one of Mr Dostam's commanders ratted on him and allowed the Taliban into the city. He then turned on the Taliban, killing, according to one estimate, some 800 of their best fighters. Mr Dostam fled first to Uzbekistan, then to Turkey. This week he was back in Mazar, although it was unclear whether he had resumed his old authority.

Even by Afghan standards of shifting loyalties, Mr Dostam's career is exceptional. He commanded the army of General Najibullah, the communist who ran the country after the Russians left in 1989. When Najibullah was deposed in 1992 by an Islamic government led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, Mr Dostam joined the new rulers, but

later turned against them and built up his stronghold around Mazar. He has given some support to the Rabbani government since it was thrown out of Kabul last year.

Mr Dostam is an Uzbek and it is probable that Uzbekistan has provided him with the means to return to Mazar. The Taliban think so. In their attack on Hayretan, ten rockets fell on Uzbekistan, possibly meant as a warning not to interfere in Afghanistan. The Taliban radio has been rude about Uzbekistan in terms usually reserved for more sophisticated meddlers such as Russia and Iran.

For the Taliban, much turns on what happens in Mazar. When they marched into Kabul a year ago, they believed that all

Afghanistan was within their grasp. But the opposition survives and is dug in just 20 kilometres (12 miles) from Kabul. Only three countries, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have recognised the Taliban as the legal government. The United Nations, as always, is trying to bring the two sides together, but with little hope of success. One year on, about all that has happened in Afghanistan is that it is a little more damaged.

AFGHANISTAN'S GOLD

Illegal heroin, derived from poppies grown in Afghanistan is flooding the city streets of Europe and North America. What makes the proliferation of opium production in Afghanistan so surprising is the fact that it is going on with the tacit approval of the strictly Islamic Taliban who came to international prominence when they issued an edict forbidding women to work or even leave the home unless in the company of a male relative, as well as banning the watching of television or listening to music. PETER WILLEMS reports from the Taliban stronghold of Qandahar province.

Since the Taliban militia in Afghanistan took Kabul a year ago this month, they have drawn world press attention while implementing a strict code of ethics based on Islamic law. People from around the world, including Muslims, shudder to hear stories of how

the Islamic faction has prevented women from working or going to school, as well as issuing a ban on television and the playing of music, forcing men to grow full length beards, and doling out beatings on the street for those caught missing prayer time. But during the campaign of intolerance and

Traders display opium bought from local farmers at Sangine which boasts the largest opium market in Afghanistan



Pictures by PETER WILLEMS

repression, a sinister and decidedly un-Islamic tolerance has developed within the Taliban for the production of poppies for opium and illegal heroin production.

Opium production in areas under Taliban control is on a massive scale and no action to curb production appears imminent.

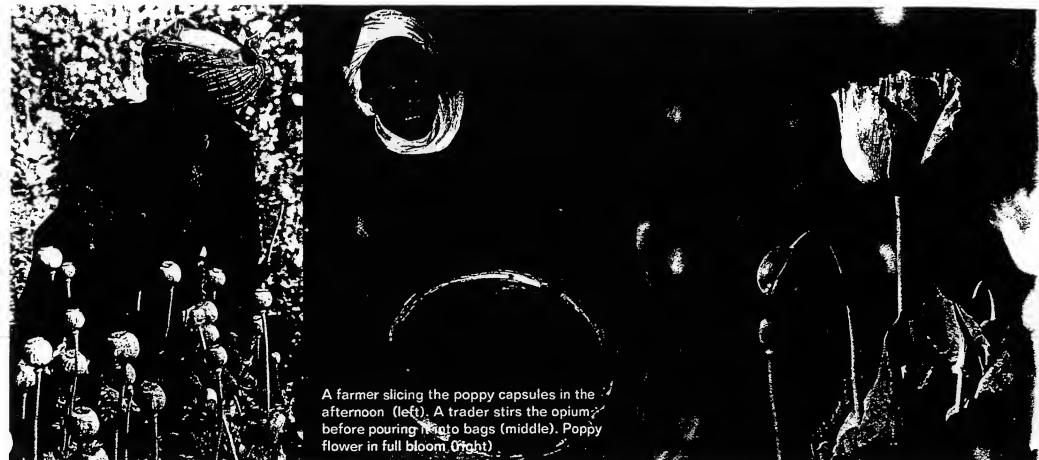
According to the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), 40 per cent of all opium on the international drug market — approximately 2,300 metric tons of raw opium — is produced in Afghanistan. The Middle East country now rivals Burma (Myanmar) as the world's leading producer.

Poppies are grown in 10 of Afghanistan's 29 provinces and eight of those 10 are under strict Taliban control. The UNDCP estimates that 96 per cent of the raw opium produced in Afghanistan comes from Taliban-held areas.

The Taliban have stated that cultivating, producing and selling illicit drugs is strictly forbidden by Islamic law. "Growing a crop that will produce an illicit drug is evil and against Islamic law, just like using an illicit drug," declared the governor of Qandahar province, Mullah Muhammad Hassan. "This is written in the Koran."

Last November, the Taliban officially condemned the use and production of illicit drugs and claimed they were prepared to fight against their use. Since then they have launched an aggressive attack on hashish users. Hundreds of sacks of hash they have seized are stored in two warehouses at police headquarters at Qandahar.

According to Abdul Rashid, head of the anti-drugs unit in Qandahar, when a hash smoker is caught, the authorities beat him until he confesses who sold



A farmer slicing the poppy capsules in the afternoon (left). A trader stirs the opium before pouring it into bags (middle). Poppy flower in full bloom (right)

him the drug. He is then dunked in ice cold water for several hours at a time, up to three times daily to help wean him off the drug. Once the abuser is "cured" he is thrown into prison for an indefinite period of time.

But despite the crackdown on hash users the Taliban militia has done nothing about opium production which is rife and the question of why they are being so tolerant of this particular vice remains unanswered.

The suspicion is that the Taliban militia is benefitting handsomely, financially, from the opium industry, with funds going towards supporting their war effort. They freely admit to collecting taxes on poppies and opium which, they say, is done under the terms of Sharia, or Islamic law. The assistant director of Pashtani Tiarati Bank, Taliban's Central Bank in Qandahar, which includes the tax department, explained that a landowner must pay 10 per cent on whatever amount he makes on his crops over the course of a year. This tax is called *usher*, meaning tenth. He must give five per cent of *usher* to the poor directly, then have the remaining five per cent divided between the local mullah and the central Islamic government, the Taliban.

As for the opium merchants, they must pay two and a half per cent tax, known as *zakat*, from their total assets which is also distributed to the poor. When it comes to government expenditures and supporting the war effort, the

bank's assistant director says the Taliban are only using money coming in from import duties, collected at Customs Houses based in cities near major border crossings, such as Qandahar, Jalalabad and Herat.

"We have not tried to separate poppies from other crops when it comes to

"After 18 years of war Afghanistan's population suffers poverty, unemployment and a sense of hopelessness"

collecting taxes. Most of our energies are currently spent on the war in the north, not on accounting procedures," said the governor of Qandahar. "We hope to eliminate the poppy fields in the future. We will not then have to worry about which crops are being sold or taxed after they are eliminated."

Another theory is that the Taliban is allowing the opium industry to flourish so that it will eventually be able to use it as a political lever. "The Taliban could be using opium production in their provinces as a tool to help sway other countries into recognising them as the legitimate government of Afghanistan," says Geddes, UNDCP's alternative development advisor.

Although the Taliban control 80 per cent of the country, no government has yet officially recognised them as the central government of Afghanistan.

"They desperately want to be recognised and to receive financial aid from other countries," added another UN source in Qandahar. "It might work out that if the countries putting pressure on the Taliban to eradicate opium production give them recognition and aid, the Taliban will follow through by giving those countries what they want: the curbing of opium production."

The Taliban give a different reason for their decision to allow opium production to continue in their territory.

They claim they would like to eradicate poppy cultivation but are concerned about the region's poor farmers who have finally found a way to make a living. "We would like to stop opium production and drug trafficking in our country," explained deputy foreign minister Sher Muhammad Stanakzai. "But poppies have been the crop providing an income for many farmers. When we can find a substitute crop that will allow them to earn a good profit, we will have them switch to it. However, we are not able to do so at this time."

Although the motivation behind the Taliban decision to allow the opium industry to flourish is unclear, what motivates the farmers is obvious. Over 18 years of internal warfare has left the country with extreme poverty, massive unemployment and little hope of an economy being rebuilt in the near future.

What can be seen in the poppy growing areas is a mushrooming of new mud brick houses and families sitting down to enjoy three solid meals a day; things that are almost unheard of in other parts of Afghanistan. Often a poppy farmer will negotiate in advance with an opium buyer, many of whom come from Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan and Russia, to be paid a portion of the costs of plowing, seeds, fertilizers and general labour involved in raising the crop.

Most of the irrigation systems in Afghanistan have been destroyed so poppies, which do not require vast amounts of water to thrive, are easier to cultivate than many other crops. But above all other considerations, the farmers can make as much as five times the amount they might expect to realise from other crops such as wheat, cotton, grapes or cucumbers. And, even though refined heroin commands 50 times more than the price paid to the farmer, once it reaches the streets of London, Paris or San Francisco, the poppy farmers of Afghanistan pulled in an estimated \$80 million last year alone.

"Opium is our only gold," explained one poppy farmer from Lashkargah, the capital of Helmand province, the country's leading opium production province, which provides 57 per cent of Afghanistan's total annual production. "For many years it has been very difficult feeding my family. I know that opium is a bad thing but through selling it I now have enough money to feed and clothe my family and I have also been able to rebuild our house, which was destroyed by the Mujahadeen several years ago."

The farmer went on to say that with as little as 10 *jerips* (about five acres) of poppies, a farmer could support his entire family on the proceeds. And it is not only landowners who are benefiting from Afghanistan's "gold". In fact most landowners do not cultivate the land themselves, preferring to rent out plots to sharecroppers who, in turn, hire labourers, especially during the harvesting season. UNDCP believes there are



The opium gum after collection

currently a million Afghans involved in opium production. "Everybody is growing poppies," says Abdul Razaq, a nurse at the local hospital in Lashkargah, who earns only 150,000 Afghanis, about \$6.50 a month, the average salary for a government employee. Fortunately, he confides, he is able to support his 14 member family by growing poppies on a small piece of rented land. "Shop owners, clerks, tailors, bus drivers and even Taliban soldiers and officials are involved in the poppy business," he adds.

Taliban officials are adamant that the faction is not involved but poppy farmers claim their denials are largely a matter of semantics. "Soldiers receive no salary; all they get is food and a place to sleep. The Taliban officials only earn \$10 a month," pointed out a farmer in Helmand. "They need money to keep themselves. If they are not directly involved, you may be sure that their families are."

While the Taliban stress they are eager to find an alternative crop to replace poppies which is, they say, their strategy to eradicate opium production in the future, reactions from the farmers to such a move is mixed. "I would be happy to switch to another crop," said Ahmad, a farmer in the Kjaki district in northern Helmand, "opium is evil and I don't like it. If I was given equipment, fertilizers, seeds and if they could improve on the irrigation system I could make as much as I now make

growing poppies on another crop."

"If the Taliban told me to stop growing poppies, I would," claimed Mahmoud, a landowner in the Argandab district just outside Qandahar. "I would never disobey the Taliban." But the further one moves away from the Taliban stronghold of Qandahar province, the more apparent it becomes that not all farmers take the same position. Many landowners and sharecroppers in Helmand say they would rebel if ordered to cease poppy production without first being given financial aid and the means to cultivate an alternative crop. In Sangine, a town in Helmand with one of the busiest opium trading markets in Afghanistan, one sharecropper declared: "If the Taliban came here and destroyed our crops, I would flee to Pakistan, join a militia and fight against the Taliban like we did against the Russians."

During the harvest season this spring and summer Afghanistan's poppy farmers recorded a bumper crop which is already filtering down to the dealers and users in far away cities. Although not ignorant of the devastation drugs such as opium and its derivative, heroin, cause in the West, both farmers and the Taliban are unwilling or unable to stop their part in the lucrative trade.

For the farmers the poppy trade puts food on the table, for the Taliban it provides funds to fuel the war effort in the north. Although the evils of so-called "hard" drugs are well known in Afghanistan, it is largely regarded as a Western problem. While the use of hash is fairly commonplace in the region — which is why the Taliban have gone to such pains to stamp it out — heroin abuse is generally associated with rich, Western markets in Europe and North America.

The farmers only see the money rolling in as their poppy crops disappear in wagons. They do not witness the end results of their labours; therefore any serious attempt to contain this trade must be implemented at a much higher level than the local sharecroppers.

TME

The New Angel of Peace?

At the front line with the Taliban's chief foe

BY SARAH HORNER

GROUPS OF DESPERATE AFGHANS struggle down from the surrounding hillsides and into the frontline village of Sher Khan. They have made their way from the besieged capital of Kabul, 22 kilometers south, where the Taliban guerrillas have imposed the strictest Islamic regime of modern times. The refugees sneak through Taliban lines, emerging with stories of growing food shortages, widespread arrests. They say the Taliban are determined to build an Afghanistan for hard-line Islamic fundamentalists, and are shooting at those who flee. One old man, Khaak Bismallah, weeps as he recounts how the Taliban forced him to carry water to its soldiers at the front. "What they are doing is not Islam," he cries.

When the Taliban took Kabul a year ago, they claimed to be "Angels of God," and many people believed them. They had brought peace to at least parts of a nation that had been at war for 20 years. But as the Taliban extended their grip over the country, they began to scare people with their angry vision of Islam. Women were forced out of jobs and behind the veil: a recent edict bans women from making noise while walking, lest the click of their heels inflame male passions. A few sinners and opponents were even hanged or stoned to death. Now popular support has shifted to the legendary guerrilla commander Ahmed Shah Massoud, who has led the toppled government's forces in a counteroffensive. Massoud's troops have fought their way to Sher Khan, within artillery range of Kabul, and last week were vowing to undo what the Angels of God have done. "People hate the Taliban," Massoud told NEWSWEEK. "Once our government returns to Kabul, we will restore rights for women 100 percent."

The people of the nearby Shomali Valley celebrated wildly when Massoud's forces came storming out of the north last month. The Taliban had driven out most of the valley's population, about 120,000 people in all, and they are now returning to a scene of devastation. As the Taliban retreated, they destroyed irrigation channels, mined civil-

ian villages, blew up drinking-water lines and poisoned wells by throwing dead animals into them. A foreign-aid worker accuses the mainly Pashtun Taliban fighters of "ethnic cleansing" in the Shomali Valley, where a largely Tajik population has long supported Massoud, a fellow Tajik. "Acts like this make it easy for my forces to advance" once the time comes, says Massoud.

That may be soon. U.N. attempts to broker a peace deal that would include the Tali-

ban's peaceful withdrawal from Kabul, followed by a general demilitarization of the city, have gotten nowhere. Zamir Kabulov, a Russian adviser to the United Nations, said recently that he thought it "highly unlikely" that the proud Taliban would agree to pull out, despite recent setbacks and falling morale. Massoud is recruiting to his side Pashtuns disaffected by the Taliban. He holds hundreds of Taliban prisoners in the deep gorges of the Panjshir Valley, a stronghold he has held since his days fighting the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. Behind tall sunflowers in a dusty compound, Taliban prisoners squinted in the blazing sun recently as Massoud's forces displayed them to foreign cameramen. Many of the prisoners glared or hid their faces in humiliation. But Ibrahim, 17, stepped forward and said that if he were released, he would quit the Taliban and go back to school in his home village of Ghazni, southwest of Kabul. Massoud's men released him the next week.

During lulls in the fighting, Massoud goes back to the home he inherited from his father, an army colonel. The house, in a valley about 90 kilometers north of Kabul, looks down on the rushing Panjshir river and the mountains beyond. It is an oasis of normal life for Massoud, who trained as an engineer in Kabul before rising to head the rebel army that eventually drove the Soviet occupiers from his homeland. Small waterfalls gush down to

the lush green fields below the house, where Massoud plays with one of his five children. His eldest son, Ahmed, 9, tells Massoud that a girl had beaten him out for the best grades in his class. That's a prize no young woman could claim in Taliban territory, where girls are no longer allowed to go to school.

Massoud's rout of the Soviets made him a national hero. Will his next act be saving Afghanistan from the Taliban? The news out of Kabul grows increasingly bleak. The Taliban have decreed that women will neither work outside the home nor receive international relief, which must be channeled through men. That makes survival a bitter puzzle for tens of thousands of war widows, many of whom face the coming winter alone, without food or fuel or work. Massoud will have to decide whether to attack soon, since heavy snows arrive as early as November: once the snow has fallen, serious ground offensives are all but impossible. In the past, September has been a lucky month for the Taliban, a season of great victories and few casualties. But this time, September could bring a bloody siege. ■



Counteroffensive: Massoud with son Ahmed, Taliban prisoners



Taleban Reneges on Opium Pledge

Herald Tribune

12/9-97

By Christopher S. Wren
New York Times Service

NEW YORK — The Muslim fundamentalist Taleban movement has pledged to crack down on opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, but opium production there has jumped by more than 20 percent over the last year, with almost all of the increase occurring in Taleban-controlled areas, according to UN Drug Control Program officials.

The agency's 1997 survey estimates that Afghan opium production rose to about 2,800 metric tons this year from 2,300 metric tons in 1996. UN officials report that Afghanistan now produces the raw ingredient for nearly half of the world's heroin.

Last year, Afghanistan ranked second to Burma, which produced 2,500 metric tons of opium, according to a U.S. State Department estimate.

Pino Arlacchi, executive director of the UN Drug Control Program, said the increase could mean more heroin flowing into Europe at lower prices. European heroin users consume about 80 percent of the heroin refined from opium grown in Afghanistan. Part of the remainder reaches the U.S. market, which is dominated by heroin from Colombia and Southeast Asia.

Mr. Arlacchi said he would raise his concerns about the output of Afghan opium at meetings Thursday and Friday

with other UN officials in New York.

"I want to inform them because we are very worried about the increase," Mr. Arlacchi said.

A U.S. counterdrug official in Washington expressed no surprise at the UN estimate of Afghanistan's opium crop. "Production has skyrocketed, we know that, and production is sanctioned by the Taleban," the official said.

Officials say the Taleban, which has seized power in 22 of Afghanistan's 32 provinces, controls 96 percent of its poppy-growing areas. The increase in output resulted from higher poppy yields, which were attributed to favorable weather, improved cultivation techniques and the shifting of some farmland to poppy cultivation, the UN survey estimated. The total number of acres under poppy cultivation increased by only 2.8 percent, however, it added. UN survey teams based their estimate on visits to 18 provinces.

The report offered fresh evidence that the Taleban has not fulfilled its promises to crack down on opium production. Taleban officials say they cannot stop peasants from growing opium poppies without other crops to substitute, and argue that persuading them to switch depends on economic assistance from the international community.

The United States and many other countries have kept the Taleban at arm's length because of its violent rise to power

and repressive policies, like the relegation of women to inferior status. But international officials and journalists traveling in Afghanistan reported that the Taleban is not just tolerating opium production but also taxing it for much-needed revenue and that Taleban militiamen have been seen guarding opium warehouses and helping transport the crop.

Taleban officials, while denying any involvement in the opium trade, concede that it is flourishing. "Huge areas of Afghanistan are under poppy cultivation, and when we ban it, we will have to give the farmers something in return, and the Islamic state of Afghanistan is not in a position to do this," said Abdur Rahman Hotaqi, Taleban's deputy minister of culture.

Mir Najibullah Shams, secretary-general of Afghanistan's drug-control commission, said: "From an economic point of view, it is difficult to find an alternative to growing poppies. The seed is cheap and it is not necessary to use many pesticides or much water. And it is a robust crop."

Afghanistan is one of six countries identified by the U.S. State Department as not cooperating sufficiently in the international fight against illegal drugs. The other countries are Colombia, Iran, Burma, Nigeria and Syria.

The State Department report said, "While the Taleban banned opium production in late 1996, it made no effort to enforce this ban."

Afghans Assail Pakistani Attack

KABUL — Opponents of the ruling Taleban forces in Afghanistan accused Pakistan of bombing their northern stronghold Wednesday, weakening defenses in the only area outside the Islamic militia's control.

The opposition group — Hezb-e-Wahadat — also accused the United Nations of ignoring the Pakistani attacks. The organization's troops are the last line of defense against Taleban units advancing on Mazar-e-Sharif, the opposition's last big stronghold.

"I have a big complaint about the United Nations," said Haji Mohammed Mohaqiq, the Hezb-e-Wahadat commander. "Pakistan is sending its jets to bomb us, they are massacring our people and the United Nations is ignoring it."

Pakistan has repeatedly denied aiding the Taleban religious army, although many of its members studied in Pakistan, where more than 5 million Afghans lived in exile during the 1980s Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. *HT 2/10-97 (AP)*

Fear Reigns as Taliban Enforces Lifestyle of a Past Millennium

By John F. Burns
New York Times Service

KABUL — Nearly a year after the Taliban Islamic movement cemented its position as the dominant power in this country by seizing Kabul, the Afghan capital is a place of deepening frustration and fear.

The white flags that the Taliban raised over Kabul's rooftops on Sept. 27, 1996, signaled the advent of a harsher form of Islamic rule. Led by Muslim clerics whose attitudes were forged in Afghan villages that have changed little in 1,000 years, the Taliban announced the intention to create "a pure Islamic society," modeled on the teachings of the Koran. Women were barred from work and girls from schools. Any woman past puberty was barred from even talking to men unless they were blood relatives. Any woman venturing from her house had to have an approved reason, like going to the bazaar for food, approaching quickly, and playing cards, listening to music, keeping pigeons and flying kites.

To impose their decrees, the Taliban unleashed an army of armed enforcers who scoured

Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan, conducting "beard checks" and other controls on behalf of a religious police force known as the General Department for the Preservation of Virtue and

the Elimination of Vice.

A year after the takeover by the Taliban, their unrelenting zeal, reflected in a fresh burst of decrees almost every week, has caused deep despair among most of the million people in

Kabul.

For many, Taliban rule is an ironic continuation of events that began nearly 20 years ago when Afghan Communists, seizing power in a coup, embarked on their own relentless vision —

destroying the mullahs' grip on Afghan society, and spreading at least some of the benefits of

20th-century life, including education for women, except for "inspections" to check that no edicts

have been breached.

In the bazaars, an old Persian word, *walshat*, meaning a paralyzing sense of fear occurs regularly in conversations. Many people seem caught between this fear and an urge to speak out, but they quickly plunge back into something

else, as a Muslim I never

thought I could say such a thing," the man said.

"I think we'd be better off under almost any kind

of rulers — Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, even Christian

— than under these fanatics. Most days, I wake

up thinking we'd be better off dead,

"God help me if the Taliban come to know

that I spoke to you," said a man working in a tiny tailor's shop in the city center. "They would call

me a traitor to Islam.

In pickup trucks bristling with guns and rock-

ets, the Taliban warriors are ever-present. Sometimes their destination is a battlefield with anti-Taliban forces to the north. But just as often, young militants roam the city seeking targets, checks, then held in freight containers that serve as detention centers until they are flogged by their families. Sometimes they round up people they label subversives, who are then released to their families for sums as high as \$1,500, a fortune in a city where many families can barely

scrape together enough money to buy the day's food.

One Afghan working for a Western aid organization erupted in anger after "morning

visiting war orphans, widows, and others who receive little or no attention from the Taliban, for the besieging forces.

Foreign reporters have been summoned by the Taliban to give "a positive response" to their opponents' pleas for moderation

once their enemies in the north, who control 10 of Afghanistan's 32 provinces, have been defeated. But they quickly reassess the basis for the restrictions on women, saying they were necessary to prevent Afghanistan from falling into the pit of "evil and corruption" that the

restrictions. Women, required to shroud themselves in head-to-toe garments called *burqa*, are to be restored the rights of women, to tighten their

restrictions. Women, required to shroud themselves in head-to-toe garments called *burqa*, are to be restored the rights of women, to tighten their

the security situation improves.

In May, loathing for Taliban clerics and fighters played a role in an uprising in the northern

Americans' intoxication with sexuality" and

of its effects, including charges against army

and drill instructors of sexual harassment and rape.

Mr. Stanakzai, 38, speaking English learned in India, contrasted this with life for women under the Taliban, which he said respected their "human rights," as well as their nature.

"In Western countries, women come out of their houses almost naked, they go freely to nightclubs, they drink, and they dance all night.

"And when our society says you cannot do such things, a woman's role is to marry a well-respected gentleman, have children and stay at home," you say we are taking people back to the old ages."

The leader of the anti-Taliban alliance, attacking Kabul, Ahmed Shah Massoud, has said

the first priority after recapturing the capital will be to restore the rights of women, to tighten the restrictions on women, saying they were necessary to prevent Afghanistan from falling into the pit of "evil and corruption" that the

restrictions. Women, required to wear *burqa*, are to be restored the rights of women, to tighten their

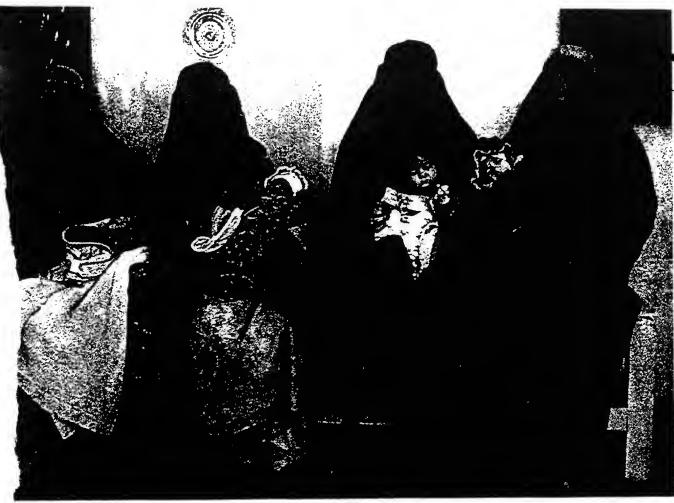
restrictions. Women, required to shroud themselves in head-to-toe garments for wearing while

now risk beatings in the streets for wearing *white* socks, long a fashion in Kabul but proscribed

by Taliban clerics. The Taliban have responded to the backlash by saying that the most controversial aspect of their rule — the exclusion of women from work

and girls from school — will be reviewed once

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CHRISTINE AMANPOUR—CNN

DESPERATE DAYS: Women in Kabul are forced to live in a strict, modern purdah

nation. In the past year, the women of Afghanistan have endured extraordinary hardship, and last week's incident proved that the Taliban has no intention of easing the stern commandments that have virtually locked women away in a modern purdah.

From the day they marched into Kabul, the Taliban's adherents have sought to eradicate women from public life. In a land where the women have had to work while the men fought, the regime has barred females from taking any job outside the home or even leaving their houses without a male relative to accompany them. Girls have been thrown out of school. Foreign-aid agencies have been forbidden to offer any of their services or assistance directly to females.

Today Afghan women cannot even expect proper medical care. Three weeks ago, the Taliban decreed that female patients could no longer be treated at any of the main hospitals in Kabul and would be completely separated from male patients and medical personnel. We discovered that sick women are being sent to a crumbling old building that has no windows, no running water, no proper operating room and barely enough electricity to power lightbulbs. The patients are tended by a meager female-only staff.

In our two-day stay in the capital city, we watched agents for the Preservation of Virtue and Elimination of Vice enforce an endless list of edicts and absurdities at gunpoint, with rifle butts, with the backs of their hands. Women are forbidden to wear high heels or white socks because they are considered a sexual lure. Music is banned: cassettes are often snatched out of cars, the tapes stripped out and hung on signs as a warning. Kites may not be flown, and most forms of public entertainment, like movies, are not permitted.

The toll such measures take on Afghan women is impossible to assess. Several told us how dispiriting it is to be thrown off a bus or forced to sit in the back. We heard reports of an increase in the suicide rate among females, and that many have sunk into despair and depression. For Afghanistan's tyrannized women, there is no escape from an unsparing, medieval way of life.

ASIA

Tyranny of the Taliban

A visit to the capital of Afghanistan's extremist regime reveals a harsh world of suppression and despair

By CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR KABUL

WE WERE STANDING IN KABUL'S ONLY hospital for women when the purist authorities of the Taliban decided they did not want any pictures taken. Screaming and shouting at us, they grabbed our TV cameras, all our tapes and even our briefcases. Several armed Taliban enforcers slapped a cameraman, while another rammed his rifle butt at visiting aid workers. One raised his hand toward Emma Bonino, the European Union Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs, there to investigate the Taliban's treatment of women, and would have struck her but for an aide's intervention. The next thing we knew, a truckload of armed men were escorting us to the central police station. After several hours, they freed us and returned our cameras but refused to give back the tapes. "Now I know," says Bonino, "what the people of Kabul have to live with every day."

The Taliban does not seem eager for the outside world to see how it has been ruling Afghanistan since its fanatical fighters stormed into the capital of Kabul a year ago. Here the young, often illiterate "students," who developed their extremist interpretation of Islam in the refugee

camps of Pakistan during the 1979-89 war against the Soviet occupation, are a law unto themselves. In 1996, when my CNN team witnessed the beginning of their enforcement of their version of Koranic law, I challenged Taliban "ministers" to explain, and they told me all women's rights would be restored "once the security situation improves."

One year later, the security situation remains dangerously unsettled. The Taliban has consolidated its hold over two-thirds of the country but is still fighting to extend its harsh rule over the entire



HARD TIME: The European Union's top humanitarian was briefly detained by the Taliban

CNN

Taliban allow girls education

1970-07-07

KABUL (AFP) — Education for girls is being permitted by the hardline Muslim Taliban for thousands of rural Afghans hoping to return home from neighbouring Pakistan, a UN official said Saturday.

The official revealed the demands for female education by up to 200,000 repatriation candidates are being met, although the strict Islamic militia maintains a tight ban in the capital Kabul.

"In Pakistan they have electricity, jobs and schools, and when they come back they want the same," Terry Pitzner of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said.

He said a massive UN initiative aimed at bringing back around 182,000 refugees from Pakistan to isolated areas in the eastern Afghan province of Nangahar, had been boosted by the Taliban's flexibility.

"They all want it (girls education), and are all convinced they can get letters from the Taliban allowing it," Pitzner said.

In most parts of the Taliban-held two thirds of Afghanistan including the relatively-liberal Kabul, females have been banned from attending work and education under a strict interpretation of Islamic law.

But Pitzner said refugees aiming to return home to rebuild their

war-shattered farming communities have greater leverage than city-dwellers recently overrun by the purist Muslim militia that originated in the rural south.

"They invited the Taliban in and if they don't get what they want they will get them out," he explained. He said most candidates interviewed by UNHCR had little concern for the tangled politics of Afghanistan's 17 year-old civil war, and so far had heard few complaints about the Taliban regime.

The reason, he explained, was that few Taliban officials are based in the isolated communities but offer the benefits of better security provided by the militia's clean-up of localised warlords.

In cooperation with other UN aid groups, UNHCR has guaranteed to provide shelter, food for work and other rehabilitation projects as soon as the refugees quit the increasingly inhospitable Pakistan.

But despite the optimism of repatriating the tens of thousands of refugees, Pitzner said up to 210 residents of Kabul continue to leave the city for Pakistan every day.

At least one million refugees who fled Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion in 1979 are currently registered in Pakistan.



Government disallows traders to enter Afghanistan

News 1970-05

From Staff Writer CHITRAL: Traders have been in a fix in District Chitral for quite some time as the local administration refused to allow entry of daily use goods to the war-ravaged Afghanistan through Pakistani territory.

A group of these traders while talking to The News informed that Pakistani authorities have asked them not to cross into Afghanistan via Shah Madeen to enter Badakhshan, the native province of former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, still under the control of anti-Taliban forces.

The traders informed that situation in northern Badakhshan, Kunduz, Mazar-i-Sharif, Baghlan and Takhar provinces of Afghanistan was going from bad to worse day by day as food items have been in short supply since long. All the supply routes linking these provinces with the rest of Afghanistan or Pakistan, they said were in control of Taliban who did not allow any supply to their rivals.

They said that Pakistan had imposed an unannounced ban on trade with these provinces despite the fact that none of the food supply items was banned under the trade agreement between the two countries.

Traders argued that Pakistani authorities must allow the food supply to Afghanistan on humanitarian ground.

They said that the United Nations and other international forums should take up the issue of opening of the Afghan border with Pakistan at emergency basis. They demanded opening of the border before the start of snowfall.

1970-05

KABUL (AFP) — Heavy fighting has erupted in the Ghorband valley where an isolated pocket of pro-Taliban residents are holding out against rival Afghan groups, state-run radio Shariat reported Thursday.

The report said repeated attacks by ex-government commander Ahmad Shah Masood and his Shiite allies had failed to break the purist-Muslim enclave, situated around 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Taliban lines north of Kabul.

"Several failed assaults of the Masood-Khalili headed militia were repulsed by the Islamic army in Ghorband during the past three days," the Taliban mouthpiece said.

Khalili heads the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat faction allied with Masood in an anti-Taliban alliance which also includes northern warlord Abdul Malik.

"The Islamic troops inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy and forced them to escape to the mountains," the report added, claiming six anti-Taliban fighters were killed.

Travellers arriving here from the Ghorband valley have confirmed a sizeable pocket of Taliban support remains in the valley, even though there are no hard-core militia fighters based in the area.

"Most of the Taliban have gone and it is only locals fighting but they are short of ammunition," traveller Nail Ahmad reported.

The narrow Ghorband valley runs west from the plains north of Kabul to the central Afghan Shiite stronghold of Bamian, and was a launchpad for Taliban attempts to advance north earlier this year.

line. Germany's Ruhrgas said it would be interested in buying 2 billion cubic metres a year of Turkmen gas.

Asian oil companies are as vigorous as the Europeans about getting a foothold in Central Asia. China National Petroleum Corp. has won the bidding for two huge oil projects in Kazakhstan that will involve \$5.3 billion in Chinese investment. China sees Kazakhstan as the next Saudi Arabia, a goal shared by Nurin Balgymbayev, president of Kazakoil, the state oil company. "We are aiming to get into the top 10 among the world's 98 oil and gas extracting companies during the next 10 years," he says.

In Turkmenistan, American companies are expected to make the lion's share of bids to develop oil and gas deposits spread over 70,000 square kilometres of the Caspian Sea shelf. The results of the international tender, which opened on September 1, will be announced in January.

Amid this rampant interest, the uncertainties are just as rife—not least being the fact that multibillion-dollar hopes are pinned on an explosive part of the world where several wars are raging. And in addition to the hostility of the U.S. Congress, Central Asian states also have to contend with a bully right next door: Russia's gas giant Gazprom.

Gazprom is determined to keep European markets for itself and to block Central Asia's access to them. It is trying to undermine the Turkmenistan-Turkey pipeline by supplying Turkey's energy needs. On August 29, Gazprom signed a deal with Turkey for a gas pipeline under the Black Sea. Costing an estimated \$3.3 billion, this pipeline would deliver Russian gas to the Turkish port of Samsun.

Since March, Gazprom has stopped Turkmenistan from exporting gas to the Commonwealth of Independent States and Europe through Gazprom-controlled pipelines across Russia. This has cost Turkmenistan revenue losses of up to 30% of its budget.

Russia has refused to allow Kazakh and Western oil companies to use its pipelines to export oil from the massive Karachaganak field in western Kazakhstan. Moscow also announced in early September that it would put up for tender to Russian oil companies energy-rich areas claimed by Kazakhstan in the disputed Caspian Sea.

Given all these obstacles, pipelines through Iran may not be just the most viable, but the only, option. Unless the U.S. opens the way to the building of more than one pipeline across Iran, American companies will have to watch from the counter, while European and Asian companies do all the feasting. ■

Anti-Taliban forces claim gains in eastern Afghanistan

Broujedri says broad-based government only solution
News 970828

KABUL: Heavy fighting has erupted in Taliban-held eastern Afghanistan with ex-government forces claiming key gains, an anti-Taliban spokesman said Wednesday.

In a satellite telephone interview, Abdullah said four key areas north of the eastern city of Jalalabad had been captured in a major operation launched earlier in the day. "Our forces captured Khewa and Dara-i-Noor districts in Ningarhar province and Sarkani and Narang districts in Kunar province, the close aide to opposition top-gun Ahmad Shah Masood said.

No independent confirmation of the claims were immediately available. In Pakistan, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported the opposition troops led by commander Hazzrat Ali attacked Taliban positions in Ningarhar and Kunar provinces.

At least six people were killed on both sides including a senior Taliban official whose jeep was hit by an artillery shell, the private information service said.

Taliban authorities have rushed

KABUL: A deal for a massive pipeline carrying Central Asian gas through war-torn Afghanistan will soon be signed with an Argentine-led consortium, officials said here Thursday.

The Afghan Ministry of Mines and Industries said a consortium led by the Argentine Bridas company looked set to clinch the deal and beat off United States and Saudi rivals UNOCAL and Delta oil.

"We have said that in the past we

will talk to any company which will give more advantages to Afghanistan", deputy minister Mohammad Azam Elmi told journalists.

Following extensive negotiations with both giants, Elmi said the best

400 militiamen to reinforce their strength in the battle zone, AIP quoted Taliban officials as saying.

Abdullah claimed around 250 Taliban fighters were captured in the operations, which he said had brought anti-Taliban fighters to within 27 kilometers of Jalalabad city.

Taliban-held Ningarhar and Kunar provinces are situated between Kabul and the Pakistan border, and are dominated by the Pashtun ethnic group of which the Taliban mostly comprise.

Earlier in the day the Taliban militia claimed the capture of key ground from their northern-based opponents in Koh-e-Safi district, 50 kilometers northeast of the capital Kabul.

Frontline chief Haji Abdul Malik said four villages had been recaptured in the dusty district, which guards a key northern entrance to Kabul and fell into anti-Taliban alliance hands after fierce fighting one week ago.

Abdullah dismissed the Taliban claims but confirmed heavy fighting had erupted in the area. "We suffered no casualties as we managed to out-

flank them," Malik explained, adding the usual militia assertion that opposition "forces of evil and corruption" have no morale.

In a related development, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Allauddin Broujerd has said that formation of a broad-based government is the only solution to lingering Afghan crisis, Radio Tehran reported Wednesday.

Discussing the current situation in Afghanistan with the leaders of Northern Alliance in Mazar-e-Sharif, Broujerd said, "All Afghan groups should have representation in such a broad based government".

He said, Iran has all along been trying to extend help for restoration of peace in Afghanistan through political consultations. Broujerd said, his country believes that continuation of war would not help at all in the return of peace to Afghanistan. The Iranian official said, Iran is also stressing that UN and Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) should discharge their heavy responsibilities towards the Afghan crisis".—AFP/APP

Heavy casualties in continued Afghan fighting

News 970829

ISLAMABAD: Clashes between Taliban militia and its rivals in eastern Afghanistan have left 50 people on both sides killed or wounded in two days, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported Thursday.

Details of the casualties were not available, the Pakistan-based private information service said, adding the Taliban had admitted three of their soldiers were killed and eight injured.

The anti-Taliban opposition Wednesday claimed its fighters had taken Khewa and Dara-i-Noor districts in Ningarhar province and Sarkani and Narang district in neighbouring Kunar, near the Pakistan border.

Unidentified Islamic militia officials, quoted by AIP, claimed Thursday the Taliban forces had repelled the opposition attacks and forced the opposition troops to flee into the mountains.

There was no independent confirmation of the claims made by the two sides following the eruption of fighting Wednesday north of Ningarhar's capital, Jalalabad.

Taliban officials told AIP the road to Kunar from Jalalabad was also fully in control of the Islamic militia.

AIP said it would be difficult for the Islamic militia to completely over-

come the opposition in the mountainous terrain in Kunar where skirmishes were likely to continue.

Previously the Taliban had come under attack in the eastern area early this year from elements loyal to the Afghan opposition.

The Islamic militia, which holds about two-thirds of territory in Afghanistan, has lost ground near Kabul in the past few months to opposition forces led by commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

The opposition gains have brought the frontlines near Kabul, the closest point being within a mere 25 kilometers north of the capital.

Meanwhile, a UN special envoy to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, is to visit Tehran on Saturday for talks with members of the new Iranian government, UN officials said Thursday.

Brahimi, sent by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to assess peace-making efforts in Afghanistan, will be the first international official to meet Iran's new Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi.

The Algerian diplomat, who has already visited Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and is currently in Pakistan, will spend three days in Tehran before flying on to Moscow on Tuesday.—AFP

Sign Pak-Turkmen gas pipeline deal

News 970829

KABUL: A package so far offered was from the Bridas-led consortium. "We are trying to finalise our negotiations and we hope next month's talks are the final ones and an agreement will be signed," Elmi said, adding that only minor terms and conditions remained to be finalised.

Bridas plans to transit 20 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year from Turkmenistan to Pakistan through a 1,280-kilometer long pipeline which is to cost around 2.5 billion US dollars.

The pipeline planned to cross their northern rivals is continuing within a mere 140 kilometers from the planned entry point of the pipeline in the northwest of the country.

Bridas, who recently opened a plush office in war-shattered and Taliban-held Kabul, say the pipeline could be completed by early 2001 to tap their \$10 billion cubic meter Turkmen gas field.

"Bridas are ready to sign and do not seem worried about the fighting, but it is we who have been a little slow because of the details of the contract," a source said.—AFP

Peace a must for

ISLAMABAD (APP) — The need for serious attention to the United Nations efforts at resolving the internal conflicts of Afghanistan is felt increasingly, Taliban officials are busy spreading lies against the Islamic Republic of Iran, said an official press release issued by the Iranian

uplift: UNDP

ISLAMABAD (APP) — UNDP administrator Jahoo Cuotavio Speth Tuesday told the Taliban authorities in Kandahar that international support for Afghanistan would depend on a durable peace settlement, finding a solution to the gender issue and the establishment of effective institutions for development cooperation.

"We are in a position to help you, but you have to help us to make this possible," Speth said at a meeting at which the United Nations and the Taliban signed an agreement to set up a joint technical committee.

The committee, the first such body to be formed in Afghanistan, will provide a forum for improved dialogue between the UN and the Taliban authorities. The aim is to identify and resolve technical issues as they arise between the Taliban and the United Nations.

But the UN efforts to assist the Afghan people are still being thwarted by the ongoing fighting. Donors are finding it increasingly difficult to provide funds for a country that has been at war

with itself for almost 20 years. The patience of the international community is being stretched and it will be unable to find the funds Afghanistan needs for rehabilitation and development, until the fighting stops, Speth added.

"It is time to move beyond the conflict and start to invest in the people of Afghanistan. The peace process and the reconstruction process must go forward together and they must go forward now." He went on to say that although the United Nations had no intention of dictating to the people of Afghanistan, "the international community does have certain expectations, which are met in other Islamic countries in which the UN works." These include the ability to employ women and men in its programmes, and assurances that girls and boys have equal rights to education and other basic needs.

The United Nations

The statement further says, "To greaterly, over the recent days too, while the special representative of the United Nations on Afghanistan is engaged in consultation with Afghan groups and neighbouring states, and the need for serious attention to the UN efforts for resolving the internal conflicts of Afghanistan is felt increasingly. Taliban officials, without any heed to the realities, are busy spreading lies against the Islamic Republic of Iran, such as impairing military training and arming Afghan groups opposed to Taliban."

The release added: "Such baseless and unfounded statements not only depict the biased intentions of Taliban, but also weaken the grounds for the all-round efforts aimed at resolving the problems of people of Afghanistan," the spokesman added.

The spokesman said the Islamic Republic of Iran had consistently sought resolute peace and stability and formation of a broad-based government in Afghanistan, and to this end has, in the course of extending full support to the UN efforts and cooperating and coordinating with relevant countries, embarked on all-round efforts to bring about an understanding among Afghan factions."

ISLAMABAD (NNN) — Tehran has denied Taliban allegations that Afghan group opposing the militia are being trained and armed in Iran. "While the need for serious attention to the United Nations efforts at resolving the internal conflicts of Afghanistan is felt increasingly, Taliban officials are busy spreading lies against the Islamic Republic of Iran," said an official press release issued by the Iranian

press here Tuesday.

The statement further says, "To

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Fighting in Taliban pocket

KABUL (AFP) — Heavy fighting has erupted in the Ghorband valley where an isolated pocket of pro-Taliban residents are holding out against rival Afghan groups, state-run radio Shariat reported Thursday.

The report said repeated attacks by ex-government commander Ahmad Shah Masood and his Shiite allies had failed to break the purist-Muslim enclave, situated around 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Taliban lines north of Kabul.

"Several failed assaults of the Masood-Khalili" headed militia were repulsed by the Islamic army troops in Ghorband during the past three days, the Taliban mouthpiece said.

Khalili heads the Shiite Herz-i-Wahdat faction allied with Masood in an anti-Taliban alliance which also includes northern warlord Abdul Malik.

"The Islamic troops inflicted heavy casualties on the the enemy and forced them to escape to the mountains," the report added, claiming six anti-Taliban fighters were killed.

Travellers arriving here from the Ghorband valley have confirmed a sizeable pocket of Taliban support remains in the valley, even though there are no hard-core militia fighters based in the area.

"Most of the Taliban have gone

and it is only locals fighting but

they are short of ammunition."

traveller Najib Ahmad reported.

The narrow Ghorband valley

runs west from the plains north of

Kabul to the central Afghan Shiite

stronghold of Bamian, and was a

launchpad for Taliban attempts to

advance north earlier this year.

Taliban allow girls education

FR
1970907

KABUL (AFP) — Education for girls is being permitted by the hardline Muslim Taliban for thousands of rural Afghans hoping to return home from neighbouring Pakistan, a UN official said Saturday.

The official revealed the demands for female education by up to 200,000 repatriation candidates are being met, although the strict Islamic militia maintains a tight ban in the capital Kabul.

"In Pakistan they have electricity, jobs and schools, and when they come back they want the same," Terry Pitzner of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said.

He said a massive UN initiative, aimed at bringing back around 182,000 refugees from Pakistan to isolated areas in the eastern Afghan province of Nangahar, had been boosted by the Taliban's flexibility.

"They all want it (girls education), and are all convinced they can get letters from the Taliban allowing it," Pitzner said.

In most parts of the Taliban-held two-thirds of Afghanistan including the relatively liberal Kabul, females have been banned from attending work and education under a strict interpretation of Islamic law.

But Pitzner said refugees aiming to return home to rebuild their

Government disallows traders to enter Afghanistan

News 27.09.05

supply since long. All the supply routes linking these provinces with the rest of Afghanistan or Pakistan, they said were in control of Taliban who did not allow any supply to their rivals.

They said that Pakistan had imposed an unannounced ban on trade with these provinces despite the fact that none of the food supply items was banned under the trade agreement between the two countries. The traders argued that Pakistani authorities must allow the food supply to Afghanistan on humanitarian ground.

They said that the United Nations and other international forums should take up the issue of opening of the Afghan border with Pakistan at emergency basis. They demanded opening of the border before the start of snowfall.

The traders informed that situation in northern Badakhshan, Kunduz, Mazar-i-Sharif, Baghlan and Takhar provinces of Afghanistan was going from bad to worse day by day as food items have been in short

But despite the optimism of repatriating the tens of thousands of refugees, Pitzner said up to 210 residents of Kabul continue to leave the city for Pakistan every day.

At least one million refugees who fled Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion in 1979 are currently registered in Pakistan.

WS

'Financial crunch creating hurdles for humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan'

News 970907

By Rana Mubashir

ISLAMABAD: Financial crunch has created serious impediments in the way of implementing all planned humanitarian assistance programme including anti-mining projects in Afghanistan by the United Nations.

The World body in its consolidated Annual Report on Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan, has given a bleak report of the ground situation there. It said the World body chalked several projects to make Afghanistan safe from the threat of mines. Most important of them to create awareness among the masses about the most deadly explosive devices by threat avoidance education and threat elimination. Among its all the programmes, emphasis was given for clearance of the most heavily mined and UXO contaminated cities of Kabul and Kandahar.

The annual report said out of 25,880,000 dollars, only 17,760,264 dollars were received. The funding came through contributions to the Afghanistan Emergency Trust Fund (AETF) and was passed on to NGO's

operating under the umbrella of UNOCHA.

According to the report, by implementing some of the projects, a total of 21.5 square kilometers of highly priority areas and 34.1 square kilometers of former battlefield areas were cleared of mines and UXOs. Demining teams during their survey, marked 20 square kilometers of high priority mined areas and 28.2 square kilometers of battlefield areas contaminated by UXOs.

Under the programme, more than 1 lakh civilians were given briefing on Mine awareness besides Mine clearance training was given to de-miners to maintain the current level of safety. During the period, a total of 10.4 square kilometers of new minefields were found in previously inaccessible areas in Kabul, Kandahar, Elmand, Ghazni, Logar and Herat.

Apart from slowing down de-mining programme due to shortage of funds, the report further said that on-going heavy fighting in several areas of Afghanistan in 1996 created serious obstacles for voluntary repatriation of refugees from Iran and

Pakistan to their places of origin in Afghanistan. In 1996 a total of 129,137 Afghan refugees (8,367 from Iran and 120,770 from Pakistan) returned to different destinations inside Afghanistan.

Of these, 109,517 returnees received UNHCR repatriation grants including cash, plastic sheeting and food packages provided by WFP upon their return to the country. Returnees from Iran were provided with transportation assistance as well.

Under the overall management of UNOCHA, WFP continued the distribution of food commodities to Displaced Persons in the camps near Jalalabad, until November 1996. A number of income generation and food-for-work projects were then started to enable the IDPs to become self-reliant. WFP provided a total of 9,337 tonnes of wheat to support the implementation of UNHCR quick impact projects (QIPs) aimed at the reintegration and resettlement of returnees in Afghanistan.

In 1996, WFP Afghanistan had required a total of 180,000 tonnes of food aid, of which 105,783 tonnes

were pledged. Of this only 78,483 tonnes arrived during 1996 and the remaining amount was delayed until April 1997. A break in the supply was averted with the borrowing of over 200,000 tonnes of wheat from the government of Pakistan. In addition, WFP received a contribution of 4,704,954 dollars from the international community through the Consolidated Appeal.

During the mass immunization campaign of 1996, spearheaded by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), UNICEF and WHO, a total of 2.6 million children under five years received supplementary doses of polio vaccine while 2.1 million received vitamin-A capsules. In addition, an estimated 1.3 million women of child-bearing age received Tetanus Toxoid (TT) vaccination shots during the mass immunization campaign and routine expanded programme of immunization (EPI) activities. UNICEF spent a total of 4,508,100 dollars on health activities, of which 1,869,800 dollars was generated through the Appeal, United Nations 1996 Consolidated Annual Report on Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan says.

Student militia heads towards Mazar-i-Sharif

News 9710909

From Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: With the help of sympathetic local forces, the Taliban in a swift attack captured Tashkurgan town Monday, to reach within 25 kilometres of Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan.

"Mazar-i-Sharif is now a besieged city. It is cut-off from almost all sides due to blockade of roads from Jauzjan and Samangan provinces to the city by forces loyal to the Taliban," claimed the supreme Taliban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar while talking to The News.

Speaking on phone from his headquarters in Kandahar, he said Taliban and their local allies had now moved beyond Tashkurgan and taken control of the bypass running towards the Afghan river-port of Hairatan on the border with Uzbekistan.

Opposition sources were reluctant to concede the Taliban claim. They insisted that all Taliban offensives in the area had been beaten back. Some opposition sources wanted to wait for arrival of more news before commenting on the situation.

However, independent sources reported strategic gains by the Taliban in northern Afghanistan following a switchover by military commanders hitherto loyal to Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Malik. Aid workers in the area reportedly said the Taliban made rapid advances from Kunduz province to link up with their allies in Tashkurgan.

Mulla Omar sounded very confident and relaxed while narrating the story of the fall of Tashkurgan, also known as Khulin. "A former mujahideen commander, Majeed Bacha, led the uprising in Tashkurgan and then called the Taliban in. "We captured 300 fighters of Gen Abdul Malik alive and between 100 to 150 of his men were killed in the fighting," he explained. He said the defeated troops were either surrendering or fleeing.

Mulla Omar's claims were also corroborated by Mulla Khairullah Khairkhwa, the Taliban interior minister, now leading his troops in battle in northern Afghanistan. Khairkhwa, who claimed that he was speaking on his satellite phone from Tashkurgan, said his forces were in

full control in Tashkurgan and surrounding areas and were now busy consolidating their newly-won positions.

He said the anti-Taliban forces retreated after the Taliban and their allies broke through three lines of defence and marched on Tashkurgan. He claimed forces loyal to the Taliban had staged uprisings in Balkh town, Chamtol, Charbolak, etc. and blocked the road between Shiberghan, capital of Jauzjan province, and Mazar-i-Sharif.

Uprisings in Samangan province, mostly by ethnic Pashtoons, were also reported. This led to blockade of the road leading to Salang and onwards to Kabul, threatening to cut off supplies to Gen Malik's allies like Ahmad Shah Masood and Hezb-i-Wahdat chief Karim Khalili.

The extension of Taliban-held areas in northern Afghanistan is something dramatic as only last May they were defeated and evicted from Mazar-i-Sharif. An expeditionary force of about 2,000 Taliban, stranded in Pule Khumri after the break-up of their brief alliance with Gen Malik, later took refuge in Baghlan town before capturing Kunduz with support from local commanders.

had changed the situation and now the Taliban would speak from a position of greater strength. "It is only a matter of time before we score further military victories," he added. "The frontlines [North] of Kabul were said to be quiet Monday. The military stalemate in the area is now seven weeks old. One report said Masood's forces, positioned 25 kilometres from Kabul, fired seven rockets that slammed into the Kabul airport compound. No damage was caused.

With Kunduz as its base, this opposition to surrender to avoid further bloodshed in northern Afghanistan. "We have told the Americans and we are telling the UN and the world that we don't want bloodshed. We also won't commit atrocities on our opponents who resort to cruelties on our men sometime back. If they continue to resist, it would lead to more bloodshed," he declared.

He said the latest military developments in northern Afghanistan

UN envoy warns of aid agencies' pullout from Afghanistan

News 970908

NEW DELHI: The Chief of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Gustave Speth, has warned that international aid agencies will pull out of Afghanistan if the war continues there.

Speth, who is a special envoy of the UN SG Kofi Annan, said here on Friday that the reconstruction of Afghanistan could begin only after the ongoing conflict between the Taliban and rival Afghan groups concluded.

Speth, has been appointed a special UN agency set up by Annan for the implementation of UN reforms package.

He told newsmen "The country is sliding steadily towards the bottom of any index you look at, and under current conditions the UN was not in a position to offer any

major developmental programme".

He further pointed out that if the situation did not improve, then very many international agencies would have to move out.

Speth, who is negotiating with the Kabul government on a UN project in Afghanistan, did not specify whether it would be UNDP or the International Committee of the Red Crescent (ICRC), which would pull out if the war did not end.

"We are trying to sustain livelyhood in some areas and the people will suffer more if we are not there," he told newsmen.

Speth said problems of the civilian population were increasing because of the prolonged conflict and said reconstruction of Afghanistan would be a costly affair for the international community. "But recon-

struction can only begin after the war stops", he added.

About his talks with the Kabul government, Speth said the World Body was waiting for a response on proposals to set up some 20 foreign-funded schools for girls and boys in Taliban-controlled territories.

He said "name a problem and Afghanistan has it", adding the UN was also in touch with the Kabul administration for cooperation in projects such as drinking water, health and education.

Speth arrived here Thursday for talks with Indian leaders on the UN Secretary General's reforms package which aimed at preparing the 185-state world body to face the 21st century.—AFP

Kabul: the most mined capital in the world

News 970909

Special to The News

By Kamal Siddiqi

THE TAJ BEGH Palace in south of Kabul is remembered by most Afghans as the place where Afghan premier Hafizullah Amin was murdered, triggering events that resulted in the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan. The historical palace, a grand building sitting on a hillock, however, played a more important role after that. It served as the military headquarters of the Soviet army and a symbol of their occupation. To protect this building, the Soviets deployed Scud missiles on a nearby hill, which is even today called the "Scud Hill".

They also laid several belts of mines to prevent the Mujahideen from storming the palace. Each belt contained several hundred mines. Nearly a decade after the Geneva accords, while the Scuds and the Soviets have left, the mines are still there, killing and maiming innocent civilians, many of whom are children who weren't even born when the mines were laid.

The nearby Dar Ul Aman Palace, closer to the inner Kabul city, is another example. Once the grand residence of King Amanullah, it stands devastated and mined today. Before it can be restored, it will have to be demined. But the palace is uninhabited. Priority goes to inhabited areas. "The Kings will have to wait. The people take precedence", says one mines jokingly.

Afghanistan witnesses over ten mine incidents in a day. Most mines don't kill. They maim for life. "Kabul

has the dubious distinction of being the most mined capital in the world", says Tahsin Disbudak, a Turkish official who overlooks the UN demining efforts in the city. But is not just the Soviets that are to blame for this distinction. After their departure, the Afghan Mujahideen planted as many mines as they tried to protect their pockets of control, especially in Kabul, which at one time was divided amongst the forces of Ahmad Shah Masood, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar and the Hizb-e-Wahdat.

A conference in the Philippines this year, in which military generals from all over the world, including Pakistan, participated, agreed that mines are not an effective weapon of war and should be discouraged. But the practical demonstration of this was witnessed when the Taliban entered Kabul last September.

The Rabbani government had heavily mined the Khairabad hills in the south of Kabul, to prevent the Taliban from entering the city. Instead, the Taliban walked in through the main road leading into the city. Today, the Khairabad hills are part of the massive demining effort taken up by the United Nations so that Afghans can live normal lives without fearing for their lives everytime they stray from a well trodden path. But for the poor Afghans, who have to collect firewood and let their animals graze, there is little choice but

to brave the dangers: and in many cases, they pay for it with their limbs.

And yet, as Afghanistan slips out of the limelight, funds from donors

to pay for the de-mining are drying up. Over 3.5 billion dollars are required to clear mine fields in Afghanistan. Only a fraction has been committed and even that is in danger of being discontinued.

Demining efforts in Afghanistan have continued for the past eight years, clearing 117 square kilometres of minefields. But demining is an expensive and risky job. Mines can go off while being unearthed. And yet, the job has to be done. 90 per cent of mines are laid on roads, residential areas, canals, irrigated and grazing. As a result, 80 per cent of the victims are civilians, of which 60 per cent are children.

Engineer Ahmad Ullah, part of the demining effort, says "We want you to tell the world of our problem.

We want you to help." To illustrate his point, we are met by victims of land mines. 13-year old Ahmad, who lost both his eyes when he accidentally stepped on a mine, says "now I can just feel the sun light." We meet nine-year old Hamidullah, who lost both his legs, as he bravely practices to walk with the help of artificial legs at an orthopaedic hospital run by the ICRC. Dr. Alberto Cairo, an Italian, provides help to several such victims of mines and oversees a mini-factory which produces orthopaedic equipment, sometimes from very unusual sources. The rubber for orthopaedic shoes come from tyres of APC's. On the face of Hamidullah is a lost look. The look of a child who still doesn't know what has happened to him.

strong bond between the two. "Sometimes I wonder who will go first", says Karim, adding "me or my dog. I hope it's me because I won't be able to bear the loss". This story is repeated every day in Afghanistan but the world continues to make mines and fight attempts to ban their production. If only they could see the harvest of death that their products yield every day in a country torn apart by war and mines.

at a facility near Peshawar, and brought into Afghanistan to sniff out mines. Dogs have been very successful in fields and open areas.

Their masters give them commands in German, the language in which they were trained. Fazal Karim, one such master, has been with his dog for several years and there is a

The record of the Taliban is good. Not only their leadership declared mines to be un-Islamic, but they are the only faction in the Afghan war which has not been found to be laying mines. They also support the UN's efforts to de-mine Afghanistan. "Ringo" and "Rex-5" are part of the demining team effort. They are both German shepherd dogs, trained

Kabul: a city robbed of its spirit

News 570707

Special to The News
Kamal Siddiqi

KABUL: The weary residents of Kabul are expecting the Northern Alliance to enter their city "within a month," with indications that they would fully support the soldiers, loyal to Ahmad Shah Masood, should such an eventuality occur.

The people, many of whom are Tajiks, are bitter over the restrictions imposed by the Taliban on the city's populace. Women are forced to wear 'burqas', men are forced to sport unshorn beards, TV and radios are banned, women are not allowed to work or attend educational institutions, and there is a general sense of fear of the religious police — the Ansar Bil Maruf Wa Nati Anil Munkir (Writing people to benevolence and stopping them from bad deeds committee) — who roam the city in Toyota pick ups and challenge anybody who they feel is disobeying the instructions of the Taliban.

"Yes, there is peace now," concedes one resident, adding "but this is at the cost of our personal freedom." Traders mostly favour the Taliban. Business is booming. Fruits, vegetable and consumer items, mainly from Pakistan, have flooded the market. But the city of Kabul, once a thriving capital, bursting with business and culture, looks today like a ghost town. Its leafy suburbs, now littered with bullet and shell-ridden houses, remain deserted while traffic on its wide boulevards is thin. A night time curfew by the Taliban ensures that almost nobody dares step out after the Isha's prayers, emerging only before Fajr.

The tell-tale signs of a once interesting the city, only 20 kilometers to the north. The shelling starts in the morning. "It is our wake up call," jokes one Afghan.

As if sensing the mood of the people, the Taliban have started easing their restrictive control. Children can be seen flying kites and men now occasionally smoke in public, things unheard of till a few months back. Even the cassette players repair shops have been re-opened although no radio or stereo is played in public. The religious police also does not stop traffic at prayers time, and has allowed ladies tailors to work.

But a UN official comments that Kabul today "is suffering from a power vacuum." Most of the Taliban leaders are at the frontline or in

national city are there; most Kabulis can speak English or Persian and go out of their way to be hospitable to guests, despite the poverty that has been caused by spiralling inflation.

There are signs of good hotels, like the Inter-Continental, with its once thriving night life. There are parks and play grounds, shopping plazas and remains of bazaars. For a Pakistani, of interest are the former residences of Mir Murtaza Bhutto, Ghafar Khan, Ajmal Khattak and Sher Marri in the posh Wazir Akbar Khan and Shahra-e-Nau areas.

Today Kabul looks less like an international centre and more like a city robbed of its spirit. Devastated by the infighting, that started shortly after the Soviets withdrew, the people of Kabul seem indifferent to the daily shelling that takes place from Masood forces, sitting at the head of Kandahar. This week, some more flew out to Saudi Arabia. "This is a dangerous situation since all power rests with a few inexperienced hands," says one observer.

Kabul is once again preparing for

As if sensing the mood of the people, the Taliban have started easing their restrictive control. Children can be seen flying kites and men now occasionally smoke in public, things unheard of till a few months back. Even the cassette players repair shops have been re-opened although no radio or stereo is played in public. The religious police also does not stop traffic at prayers time, and has allowed ladies tailors to work.

But rising prices have forced many, mostly government servants, to sell all their house belongings — from furniture to extra clothes — to traders, who in turn sell them at the Frush Gah, the city's main market.

The average monthly salary of a government servant does not exceed 20 dollars. But despite subsidised bread for the city residents, most can't make both ends meet.

Despite the fact that the city is treadling back to normalcy and there

is some new construction going on, there is an unease caused by predictions that the city will once again witness serious fighting as the Northern Alliance closes in. Ahmad Shah Masood's forces already control Bagram Air Base, from where they constantly pound the Kabul Airport.

The Taliban try hard to reassure with their presence. Black turbaned Talibis, with 'kohl-lined' eyes, sport kalashnikovs and ride around the city keeping an eye on people and crime.

But UN officials say that crime is creeping back in the city despite the harsh punishments meted out to criminals. "The problem is poverty. People steal to eat," says an observer. But "with no end to the fighting in sight, there is little chance that people will not suffer another long hard winter in Kabul. This has affected the morale of the people, some of whom say, 'all we want is peace.' But this is something that has eluded the city for over a decade and with no chances of returning any time soon."

Iran seen as main supplier of land mines to Afghanistan

PESHAWAR (PPI) — Iran is the second top contributor to the destruction of the war-ravaged Afghanistan and the main supplier of landmines to the various warring factions after the Russian troops withdrawal. Iran is responsible for the killing and maiming of thousands of Afghans, disclosed a worker of a demining agency in Kabul adding 'Tehran had supplied heavy weapons and landmines to the Shias Hezb-i-Wahdat.'

"The Hezb-i-Wahdat used these weapons and landmines against the forces loyal to former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani and his strongman Ahmad Shah Masood before the emergence of the Taliban," the aid worker said on the condition

of anonymity.

Northern parts of Kabul were the stronghold of the Hezb-i-Wahdat and when Masood forces forced the Shias out of the Afghan capital, they planted landmines all along the area, he said.

He maintained that when the Taliban had been knocking at the doors of Kabul, Iran readjusted its policy and joined hands with her former rival Masood to keep the Taliban of the capital. Fearing the Taliban, Iran extended all-out support to the southern parts of Kabul wherefrom the religious militia was making advances, the aid worker said.

He said at least 20 innocent people had been killed by these landmines only in Chehelsatoon area where agency was still working to clear mines.

Other countries, which the work believed were responsible for the uncleared 10 million anti-tank and anti-personnel landmines across Afghanistan, include Russia, China, Italy and Pakistan, saying Russia had 80 per cent share in the total landmines, while Pakistani landmines came through 'mujahideen' during the Soviet occupation.

Most of the area around Kabul has been cleared by the demining agencies, but there still remained some high priority areas to be cleared. The demining agencies are using trained dogs and metal detectors to find landmines. Dogs are comparatively more effective as the detectors are time-consuming and also involved life risk for the workers.

UN's still-born role

Nasim Zehra

News 970905

Shortly the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan will be educated in the obstacles to any meaningful mediation by the UN. His newly-appointed envoy is headed back to New York. Without willing acceptance of a UN peace-making role by the conflicting parties, the UN can play no role. His findings will help Mr Annan with the report he will submit to the 52nd session of the UN General Assembly beginning September.

Soon after taking charge he had moved on Afghanistan. He discovered the negligible role his predecessor's envoy to Afghanistan Dr Nobert Holl had played since he began work in August 1996. An able Algerian diplomat Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi was mandated to undertake what was essentially Holl's task. Brahimi as special envoy was to "assess peacemaking activities in Afghanistan". The UN said he would advise the secretary-general "on all aspects of the United Nations peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan".

Some expectations of breaking new ground on possibilities for a UN mediation role had accompanied Brahimi's send-off from New York. Selecting a man with the 'right' cultural credentials was important. The 57-year-old Brahimi, a seasoned diplomat with practical experience in conflict resolution, fitted the bill. In his home country Algeria, he rose to occupy the highest post and became the foreign minister for Algeria. Brahimi after serving as ambassador in Cairo and London has also occupied important UN positions. His language skills include Arabic, English and French. Son of a learned Islamic scholar and mufti who was well-versed in the subcontinental writings on Islam, Maulana Maudoodi's writings are not unfamiliar to Brahimi.

Beginning with his August 15 arrival in Pakistan Brahimi met with all those, inside and outside Afghanistan, who to varying degrees create today's Afghan reality. From among the Northern Alliance the UN envoy met the Uzbek General Abdul Malik, the Jarint men Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani and Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, and the Hizb-e-Wahdat man Karim Khalili. Brahimi's meetings with the Taliban men took place in Kandahar, Kabul and Islamabad.

In Islamabad he met with Mohammad Wakil, in Kandahar he met with Governor Mulla Ghous and in Kabul with Minister Mulla Jaleel. Brahimi's meeting with the Taliban chief Mulla Omar however did not materialise. He had to depart about 12 hours prior to Mulla Omar's return to Kandahar. In addition Brahimi met in Peshawar with the members of a newly-emerging

Afghan grouping including commander Abdul Haq. From among the external parties deeply involved in Afghanistan's civil war, Kofi Annan's envoy met with the Iranian, Pakistani, Russian and Uzbek officials. He will be visiting European capitals including London, Paris and Rome on his way to New York.

From these meetings Brahimi has drawn no new conclusions. He has reiterated his position clearly, though in Afghanistan's circumstances a 'wishful' one, that the Northern Alliance and the Taliban should talk to each other. He also advocated a more flexible Taliban position vis-a-vis the Northern Alliance and a more competent handling of administration issues by the Taliban in the 24 provinces they control. Brahimi's expectations of Islamabad must be that there will be effective 'tutoring' by the Pakistanis of their Taliban beneficiaries.

The Taliban need to mitigate unconditional political dialogue; that peace without a broad-based representative government is not possible; and, finally, that the idea of a peace conference is simply premature, if not misplaced. For neither side is willing to agree on the precondition for dialogue been set by the other; the Taliban are demanding release by the Northern Alliance of the Taliban prisoners held by them and the Northern Alliance is calling for demilitarisation of Kabul prior to the holding of dialogue.

Beyond this Afghanistan's current political reality, that of the ongoing civil war, also militates against Brahimi's rational conclusions. It is a reality built around three specific factors. One, none of the Afghan factions enjoying military dominance have been willing to enter into negotiations with a 'weaker' group. Two, force has been the defining factor in Afghan politics not any administrative or intellectual competence. Three, military and economic support provided to warring factions by the neighbouring states has greatly contributed to the continuation of the Afghan civil war.

Essentially since the 1992 Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan these three factors, perhaps to a varying degree, have defined the political ascendancy and decline of various Afghan factions. No political entry or exit from Kabul has been a dialogue-triggered one. Rocket-rains alone have altered political climate. Perhaps the only exception was the stepping down of President Sibghatullah Mujaddadi under the terms of the 1994 Islamabad Accord. Mujaddadi, militarily, was a weak entity; Rabbani was not. Accordingly in violation of the Islamabad Accord he refused to step down and continued as president until forced out by the Taliban on September 27.

The militarily superior Soviets were will-

ing to leave Afghanistan only when the cost of staying in power was high. The last Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev had said it had turned into "a bleeding wound" as the Soviets exited under the cover of the 1988 Geneva Accords. Today's Afghan situation holds no parallel with the 1988 "bleeding wound". The warring factions, supported by external patrons, do not consider the human and material cost of a continuing conflict as high. Stoppage of external support at present is not conceivable. Larger strategic objectives of Afghanistan's neighbours compel them to support the Afghan factions.

Given this complex situation some Western capitals believe the UN role can be of mediating peace among the non-Afghan parties to the conflict including the United States. Perhaps a second round of Geneva can solve what now appears to be an intractable Afghan problem.

In the normal flow of events there is no getting away from the past. The die in Afghan political culture was cast in the years of the great CIA-funded Islamabad-authored Afghan jihad. Then the gun-powder language had triggered a zero-sum game of politics among the Afghans. Political accommodation was not on the cards. In power bazaars labels of the acceptable and the non-acceptable, of the jehadi and the evil communist, and of the nationalist and the 'foreign agent' were freely exchanged on basis of political opportunism. Yesterday's 'evil communist', the Uzbek general Rasheed Dostum became acceptable to Hizbe-Islami Gulbadeen Hikmatyar if he helped Hikmatyar in his power struggle. Similarly the May ally of the Taliban became their arch enemy within 72 hours.

Beyond the Afghan factions Afghan's neighbours equally comfortably have been changing labels. Yesterday's enemy for Tehran Hikmatyar is today a useful find for them. Islamabad's instant discovery the "young and sharp" General Malik is today a totally distrusted man in Islamabad. Such are the patterns of power play repeating themselves in Afghanistan's case.

Meanwhile the UN can play a distinctly two-dimensional role in Afghanistan. At the humanitarian level it must increase its efforts aimed at mobilising member states to contribute to a fast diminishing pool of humanitarian and reconstruction funds.

Humanitarian aid needs to be provided to all of Afghanistan disregarding the political orientation of the controlling factions. On the political front, however, the choice is not the UN's own. The UN faces a tough task. Without a shared view among Afghanistan's neighboring states of what a future Afghan political setup must be, UN peacemaking on Afghanistan will be still-born leaving the UN to essentially remain active only on the humanitarian front for now.

Taliban enter Mazar-i-Sharif

Opposition denies setback; gunbattles continue

From Ismail Khan

PESHAWAR: In a little over three months of their humiliating defeat in Mazar-i-Sharif, the Taliban reportedly supported by Hezb-i-Islami commanders entered the northern city of Afghanistan Tuesday, captured the airport and consolidated the gains in a day-long battle with the forces of Gen Maalik and Hezb-i-Wahdat.

Independent sources and international aid workers said sporadic gunfire in different parts of the city forced the people inside their houses, and markets were closed and tension was mounting. "It is not clear who is fighting who, but there is a street fighting right now in Mazar-i-Sharif", an aid worker said. "The streets are deserted and markets are closed", he said, adding international relief agencies have been asked to stay off the streets.

The ICRC staff in Mazar-i-Sharif

has also been asked to remain inside their offices till further orders. Unconfirmed reports said chaos followed gun-battle inside the city, a UN office was looted by unidentified gunmen. The UN, however, is said to have not made up its mind as yet for evacuating its staff from the beleaguered city.

Head of the Jundush-i-Milli Afghanistan, Gen Abdul Maalik whose dramatic switches to and against the Taliban on May 28 had led to the hu-

miliating defeat of the students militia conceded fighting in Mazar and blamed the pro-Taliban elements for shooting. Maalik said fighting continued till afternoon and subsided afterwards. "The city is calm and in our full control", he said in a radio interview.

Dr Talib, a spokesman for opposition alliance told The News that the

Taliban and their supporters had come very close to Mazar but denied they entered the city. "Some fighting took place but our forces with the help of the people have pushed them back", he claimed.

Maulvi Khairullah Khaikhwa, Taliban's interior minister, who is spearheading the new push towards Mazar claimed the students militia and their allies had taken over the Mazar Airport. "Right now I am at the airport and we are consolidating our positions", he said through his satellite phone. Khaikhwa said the opposition forces gave up after initial resistance and had left behind a number of dead bodies and armament. Independent sources confirmed the claim but Dr Talib denied it. "Our forces are still in command of the airport", he said.

Reports said three opposition jets flew from the opposition stronghold of Shiberghan and defected to the Taliban. Two SU-22 jet fighters landed at Herat while a third one flew into Shindand airbase. No further details were available about the

persons on board the jets.

Khaikhwa said the Taliban were mobilising their fighters for a full-scale onslaught on the Mazar but did not say when he intended to do so.

The reports said the Taliban's dramatic resurgence in northern Afghanistan and the strategic Mazar-i-Sharif has been made possible by the Hezb-i-Islami commanders Majid Bacha, Bashir Khan and fighters of Juma Khan Hamdard, who himself is in Tehran for consultations with the party chief Gulbadin Hikmatyar. A Hezb source said Bashir Khan has launched an attack on Mansur Naderi forces in Puli-Khumri - a pass straddling the strategic Salang Highway, linking to the south with Kabul and had made substantial gains.

While Majid Bacha helped the Taliban with the much needed breakthrough in Samangan and onwards, Juma Khan's fighters helped the students militia in taking control of the Mazar-i-Sharif airport and triggered street battles inside the city. What apparently started a revenge attack by Majid Bacha against Commander Masood and led to Taliban's dramatic bounce-back, observers said, is a carefully thought-out plan.

A Hezb leader Ustad Qasimur Rehman refused to comment on it but said that the present scenario will result in a centralised government in Afghanistan and alay apprehensions of the country's division along ethnic lines. Another party source however, said the Hezb commanders have been told in clear terms to support the Taliban.

Dr Talib played down reports of an alliance between the Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami and said that the latest situation was the result of some 'misunderstanding' between local commanders.

FP 970918

Unesco sounds alarm on Afghan cultural heritage

PARIS (AFP) — UNESCO Director General Federico Mayor has called on the Afghan people and the international community to protect Afghan cultural heritage after several recent attacks damaged Buddha monuments, the UN's main cultural body announced Wednesday.

Mayor launched the call Monday during a visit to Pakistan after learning that bombs in Afghanistan's Bamian region damaged the head of a large Buddha, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation said.

The heritage of Afghanistan, strategically situated on the former silk trade route, "has suffered in a growing fashion from the conflicts and the disasters that have struck the country in these latest times," Mayor said.

Taliban claim taking key Uzbek border port

ISLAMABAD (AFP) —

Afghanistan's Taliban militia Wednesday claimed control of a key northern port on the country's Uzbekistan border. Afghan sources quoting Taliban officials said, Taliban fighters captured Hairatan port on the Oxus River, also known as Amu Darya, which separates the war-ravaged country with its Central Asian neighbour Uzbekistan, the official told the private Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) based in Pakistan.

He said the Taliban fighters also captured four tanks as "the enemy troops fled without any big fighting."

Meanwhile, fierce exchanges of artillery and rocket fire between Taliban forces and their northern opponents pounded areas close to the anti-Taliban base of Mazar-i-Sharif, aid workers said.

Wednesday, foreigners working in the city said, Taliban fighters remained within 35 kilometers (22 miles) east of the city, and had been striking the airport from their gunner positions.

"The frontline is just beyond the Hairatan junction and there is still an exchange of rockets and artillery," reported a source from

the United Nations, who have a military observer in the field.

The turnout on the main road leads to Hairatan, a town on the border with Uzbekistan. Aid workers confirmed the road remained impassable due to the proximity of the fighting. "All traffic along that road has stopped, as the junction is under fire," said a western aid source.

Although Taliban fighters have been kept at bay from the dusty northern city, the main supply route for the opposition alliance to frontlines north of the Afghan capital remains blocked.

The Red Cross, and United Nations said they were hoping to fly to the city on Thursday to carry in much-needed medical supplies and relieve exhausted expatriate staff.

An earlier report said Saudi Arabia has pledged to aid the hardline Afghan Taliban's quest for international acceptance and provide assistance to areas under their control, a top militia official said Wednesday.

During a visit this month to meet King Fahd, a top militia delegation solicited political and financial help from the Arab back-

ers of the strict Muslim movement, the official said.

Taliban lose stranglehold over Mazar-i-Sharif

9770915

KABUL (AFP) — Taliban forces have been beaten back from the opposition base of Mazar-i-Sharif, with alliance forces clearing the city since fighting began, to bring in medical supplies and replace exhausted expatriate staff.

The militia's mouthpiece, Radio Sharif, maintained Sunday that the Taliban still held the airport. No Taliban or opposition officials were contactable to submit their military claims.

Situated 310 kilometers north of Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif is the seat of the alliance's shadow government and the only Afghan city not in Taliban hands.

Aid workers say much of looting led by disaffected alliance troops has ended, but confusion over the political set up in the city remains with the return of exiled Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam.

In May, alliance general Abdul Malik briefly joined forces with the Taliban to oust his one-time boss Jumbesh-i-Milli party leader Dostam, who fled the country for Turkey.

But Malik switched sides again back to the alliance only a few days later, seeing the Taliban expelled from Mazar-i-Sharif amid heavy street battles mainly instigated by Shiite fighters in the city.

Malik was himself pushed aside by the Shiite Muslim Hezb-i-Wahdat faction on Tuesday, and with Dostam is now back in Mazar-i-Sharif and in command of part Jumbesh. Malik's current political status remains unclear.

The alliance comprises Hezb-i-Wahdat and forces loyal to ex-government commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations said they were hoping on

Monday to make the first flights to the city since fighting began, to bring in medical supplies and replace exhausted expatriate staff.

The militia's supporters from areas around their stronghold, sources said Sunday.

Aid workers said the road leading east from the city was clear "some distance" beyond a key road junction, and local pro-Taliban rebels to the south and west had also been repulsed from the edge of the city.

"The airport is controlled by Wahdat and Jumbesh, and there is no longer any fighting to the south of it where there had been some local pro-Taliban uprisings," a western aid worker said.

Another western aid worker said he had just completed an early morning reconnaissance mission beyond the airport and to the Uzbekistan border road junction situated 30 kilometers east of Mazar-i-Sharif.

"From the turnoff the fighting can be heard, but it seems to be around another 10 kilometers down the road. The soldiers say it is much further," he explained.

Areas west of the city, where local pro-Taliban commanders from the fellow ethnic-Pashtun Hezb-i-Islami faction have attacked for the previous five days, had also been cleared, aid workers said.

On Thursday, Taliban fighters advanced to within 15 kilometers of the city, as alliance groups turned on each other in their own power struggle, leaving the city to looters.

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations said they were hoping on

Malik ousted in coup, Taliban pushed back

9770915

KABUL (AFP) — Anti-Taliban warlord Abdul Malik has quit his northern stronghold following an apparent coup by allied factions, who have also reversed earlier Taliban gains close to the city, sources reported late Tuesday.

Quoting details given by a number of local residents and fighters in Mazar-i-Sharif, aid workers said the city was now held by a combination of mainly Shiite Muslim anti-Taliban elements following afternoon street battles.

"What appears to have happened is an internal coup, and the city no longer seems under threat from the Taliban," a western humanitarian worker explained after emerging from his basement and speaking to soldiers patrolling the city.

He said a combined force of the Shiite Muslim Hezb-i-Wahdat faction, ex-government troops and forces loyal to Malik's predecessor — General Abdul Rashid Dostam — were now controlling the city.

Other sources said that after heavy factional clashes in the early afternoon, the central mosque announced that Hezb-i-Wahdat and another Shiite faction, Harakat-i-Islami, jointly held the city.

According to the source, at least two vehicles belonging to unidentified uniformed fighters, and a chaos by unidentified uniformed fighters, and a number of dead bodies remain on the streets.

"People are back on the streets and a lot of them are chanting pro-Dostam slogans, and the town is full of reports that he may come back," the source added.

In May this year, Malik briefly joined forces with the Taliban to oust General Dostam, allowing the militia a triumphant entry into Mazar-i-Sharif.

But when a deal over power-sharing broke down, Malik rejoined the opposition alliance and expelled the Taliban following heavy street battles, while Dostam sought refuge in Turkey.

Earlier in the day, the Taliban managed to advance to within 20 kilometers of the opposition stronghold and capture the city airport, but aid workers said the advance appeared to have been

reversed.

"There have been no confirmed sightings of the Taliban close to the airport since a counter attack,

and soldiers here say the frontline has moved back about 10 kilometers," another western aid source said.

No independent confirmation of how close Taliban positions were from Mazar-i-Sharif — situated about 310 kilometers (190 miles) north of Kabul — was immediately available.

And no alliance officials were available to comment on the latest developments in the city, the only major Afghan city not held by the Taliban.

There have been no reports on the current whereabouts of Malik. Dostam was last reported to be in Tashkent, the capital of neighbouring Uzbekistan.

Despite the reports of a counter attack on Taliban positions to the east of the city, it was clear the alliance was suffering from defections to the Islamic militia in the west.

Part of a key highway leading west from Mazar-i-Sharif, the Sheberghan road, was being held by a turncoat commander from the unaligned Hezb-i-Islami faction, western sources said.

"There was also fighting in Maimana between Malik and Hezb-i-Islami troops," the aid worker added.

Military sources say the Taliban fighters to the east of the city have advanced from Kunduz province, situated around 250 kilometers (155 miles) north of here and seized by an expeditionary force in June.

Although first trapped north of the vast Hindu Kush mountain range by turncoat commanders, the Taliban force has been slowly expanding into areas populated by fellow ethnic-Pashtuns.

The latest bout of fighting comes as a senior Taliban leader accused France of giving military support to opposition forces led by ex-government commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

"French engineers, who are now in Mazar-i-

Sharif, are servicing (Masood's) planes and other arms," Mohammed Rabbani told a press conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he has met King Fahd and UN envoy for Afghanistan.

He also criticised India, Russia, Iran, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for supporting the anti-Taliban alliance.

Aid groups shattered by northern Afghan turmoil

BP 970914
KABUL (AFP) — Humanitarian aid to Afghanistan has been dealt a shattering blow following widespread looting of agencies in the besieged anti-Taliban northern stronghold, senior aid officials here told AFP.

In three days of rampaging, armed gangs have targeted foreign aid groups based in Mazar-i-Sharif which is currently under attack from the hardline Muslim militia.

"These incidents have shattered the aid programme for northern Afghanistan," said Kees Rietveld, Afghan coordinator for the European Community Humanitarian Organisation (ECHO).

ECHO, which channels a colossal 45 million dollars of European cash to Afghanistan a year, had all of their supported agencies struck by the chaos.

"They have sent every programme we have back at least two months," Rietveld complained. "Those months were stolen not only from the European taxpayer, but far more importantly from the

Afghan people."

Beleaguered western aid groups in the city were counting the costs after losing vehicles, radios, satellite telephones, bathroom fittings, clothing and medicines to disaffected alliance troops.

"An armed gang broke into our office armed with guns and plumbing tools. They used wrenches to loot taps, toilets and other bathroom fittings," recounted one distressed French aid worker.

One highly regarded aid group, International Assistance Mission (IAM), also suffered a near-crippling blow from disaffected troops that went on the rampage as fighting raged outside the city.

"Our office in Mazar has had seven vehicles — almost our entire fleet — looted. This is a massive blow," said an IAM worker. Funded mainly by private donations, IAM have been working in Afghanistan for over 30 years.

Aid groups also hit include OXFAM, Pharmaciens sans Frontieres, Médecins sans Frontieres, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the

Red Cross and Red Crescent Federation and German Agro Action.

One aid worker contacted in the city told AFP the bandits were "ready to kill," as tales of expatriate staff being held at gunpoint filtered into their headquarters here.

No physical harm to aid staff has yet been reported.

Afghanistan desperately needs vast amounts of aid after more than 17 years of civil war which has left much of its population destitute and unable to help themselves.

Problems stem from a shattered infrastructure, amputee victims of the estimated 10 million landmines in the country and poor hygiene.

Rietveld said the widespread looting will have a massive impact on the morale of dedicated aid workers who regularly risk their lives in the humanitarian cause.

"The biggest effect will be on the morale of these very people. Money may keep coming, but aid workers may not," he explained.

Female education in Afghanistan under Taliban belies Western claims

BP 970918
By M. ILYAS KHAN

PESHAWAR — The Taliban in Afghanistan may not be as averse to female education as the Western world believes, or as they themselves pose, latest information originating from Afghanistan reveals.

A survey of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) has found that almost 80 per cent of the girls' schools located in rural areas under Taliban's control remain undisturbed.

An obvious inference to be drawn from this fact is that the Taliban are mostly imposing restrictions in urban areas, such as Kabul and Herat, so as to get wider publicity for what they believe to be the Islamic way of life.

Ms Pia Karlsson, education advisor at the Education Technical Support Unit (ETSU) of SCA, said in a recent interview

that in Ghazni, where the Taliban have dominated for the last two years, approximately 85 per cent of the girls' are still in schools.

"It is mainly in one province — Logar — where the number of girl students have greatly reduced," she said, adding it was because the governor of Logar was opposed to female education. "But it may be different with the next governor; in the Taliban areas, the governors often change."

She said in most areas, which were over-run by the Taliban, girls' schools were initially closed for some time, but were then allowed to re-open, such as in Paktika.

In Herat, the Taliban closed down all girls' schools and since then they have remained closed, but in a refugee camp just outside Herat over a third of the stu-

dents are girls, she said.

"The harsh policy has been more strict in Kabul," Ms Karlsson said. "The picture outside the cities is totally different, however. In rural areas, the personal factor is crucial. What matters is who the governor is, and who heads the educational sector. The policy is also different on whether the population Dari speaking or not. The Taliban are less likely to impose their ideas on Dari-speaking population and the nomads."

As for the Pakhtun population, "they have traditionally never had many girls' schools," she said, adding, "one cannot hope to bring new ideas (to these areas). Nothing happens overnight in rural Afghanistan."

The SCA which has been supporting elementary education in Afghanistan since 1984, currently supports 422 boys'

schools, 125 girls' schools and 897 mixed schools (co-education) in the form of primary schools and home schools.

A survey of these schools, conducted during June-July 1997, studied 100 SCA supported girls' schools in the nine Taliban-controlled provinces, Kabul, Kandahar, Lashkar Gah, Nangarhar, Ghazni, Logar, Paktika, Paktia and Wardak.

According to the findings of the survey, the number of girl students found present in these schools were 7,341, or 94 per cent of the total enrolment, which stood at 7,834. Permanent absentees were found to be 488, or 6 per cent.

More significantly, at least 170 female teachers were found to be working in the surveyed schools, most of which are home schools. Ms Karlsson in her interview explained home schools as schools that were set up as an alternative to ordi-

nary rural primary schools in 1994-95, mostly before the advent of the Taliban.

"These schools were introduced in areas considered more conservative and traditional," she said, adding, "the purpose was to educate girls in classes one to three." Normally, these schools are based in the homes of the female teachers, and being uncontroversial, they are very useful even in extremely conservative settings, she said.

Surveyors further found that 48 per cent of girl students were attending Grade 1, a fact which reflects that many new girls' schools have started this year, most of which are home schools.

They also found that while girls' schools were altered to boys' schools in Logar province after the advent of the Taliban, there was still one girls' school operating with 40 students.

Ms Karlsson said it was possible to continue, and even expand, girls' primary education in Taliban-controlled rural areas provided one kept a low profile, resorted to occasional negotiations and discussions with the Taliban authorities, and when the need arose, to threaten withdrawal of all financial assistance to education in Afghanistan.

"The principles regarding women's role in Afghanistan were established by the UN secretary general in autumn last year," she said.

The Nordic countries and the EU support these principles, but UNICEF appears to adhere to a more strict stance when applying these principles by cutting support to education in all Taliban-controlled areas. The result is that those girls who most need this support are excluded."

Fierce battles raging near Afghan opposition bastion

F 970921 070127

Seven Iranian aid workers kidnapped

KABUL (AFP) — Taliban and their opponents battled Thursday for control of the northern bastion of Mazar-i-Sharif, as three rocket attacks struck close to the capital held by the Islamic militia.

There were scenes of chaos in Mazar-i-Sharif after looters went on the rampage seizing goods and vehicles from the aid agencies, sources in the city said.

Both the Taliban and opposition alliance officials reported the frontlines were around 18 kilometers east of Mazar-i-Sharif, the seat of government for the anti-militia movement.

"There is heavy fighting within one kilometer of the airport, which we control and are attacking from, but the Taliban have some hills to the south," said Jawad, a spokesman for Hezb-i-Wahdat.

As fierce infantry and artillery battles raged close to the city limits, western aid workers were counting their losses after more than 36 hours of looting by disaffected alliance fighters within the city.

"The WFP (World Food Programme) compound was cleaned out, another UN agency lost three cars and a small aid group had five cars looted," a western aid worker in the city said.

So far no aid workers are reported to have come to any physical harm, but some aid agencies have been assigned armed guards from local factions.

"Our office was looted this morning, and they even stole taps and other bathroom fittings, but left behind our stock of medicines," said a bemused PSF spokesman.

"The bandits storming the offices are ready to kill if you stand in their way, but we are trapped

here and cannot get out. All the roads out are cut," explained another European aid worker contacted in the city.

Meanwhile, three rocket attacks struck near Kabul airport Thursday, apparently fired by anti-Taliban fighters, residents said.

The huge explosions shook the capital and sent clearly visible plumes of dust and smoke towering above the airstrip.

"Two large rockets hit a deserted part of the prefabricated house factory but there were no casualties as nobody was in the area," one resident said.

In Mazar-i-Sharif most of the looters were said to be from the Jumbesh party of ethnic Uzbek warlord Abdul Malik.

They have apparently been expelled by their one time allies after an internal power struggle against two Shiite Muslim factions, Hezb-i-Wahdat and Hizb-i-Islami.

The two factions now jointly control the city with ex-government troops loyal to Masood.

All road exits remained cut as local pro-Taliban commanders had also begun similar revolts within 20 kilometers west of the city.

Taliban's minister of Information and culture Amir Khan Muttaqi said the ultimatum to surrender or face a massive onslaught remained in force.

But he added the militia was trying to make contact with aid workers. "I understand that the aid workers are trapped, so we are trying to talk to them so they can find a way out," Muttaqi said in a satellite telephone interview.

All United Nations and Red Cross flights to the city have been suspended.

have been kidnapped in northern Afghanistan, the scene of clashes between the Taliban forces and the opposition, the Iranian foreign ministry announced Thursday.

The ministry said the workers were seized by an "anonymous" group outside the city of Mazar-i-Sharif on Wednesday, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Five of the captives worked at a clinic offering "humanitarian services" and the other two worked at a refugee camp, it said.

A report from Dushanbe said: "We condemn this inhuman act and hold the captors responsible for the lives of the detainees," the ministry said, calling for their immediate release.

The hardline Islamic Taliban militia has been battling with the opposition for the control of the northern Afghan stronghold.

Fighting was reported on Thursday close to Mazar-i-Sharif, which is the bastion

of the Talibans, occupied about two thirds of the country since seizing the capital Kabul in September last year.

A report from Dushanbe said:

Tajikistan denied Thursday a

claim by the Taliban movement in neighbouring Afghanistan that five Afghan fighter jets had landed in the ex-Soviet republic.

"I deny this report, which does not reflect reality," said Tajik press spokesman Zafar Saidov.

Tajikistan does not interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs. We want a united Afghanistan," he told AFP.

Taliban spokesman Syed Mohammad Haqqani said Thursday the five jets had heavily bombed Taliban positions in the suburbs of Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan, and he warned Tajikistan of "serious consequences if it did not immediately stop its interference."

On Wednesday, Taliban chief Mulla Mohammad Omar said the planes had flown to Tajikistan from Sheberghan base, near Mazar-i-Sharif, on northern warlord Abdul Malik's instructions.

Talibani opposition forces based in northern Afghanistan have launched frequent raids into Tajikistan since President Emomali Rahmonov toppled an Islamic-democratic coalition in Dushanbe in 1992, but the two sides signed a landmark peace agreement on June 27.

The Taliban have occupied about two thirds of the country since seizing the capital Kabul in September last year.

A report from Teheran said: Seven Iranian relief aid workers

Jewish TV searching lost tribe in Afghanistan

F 970921

By AHMAD MUAFFAQ ZAIDAN

PESHAWAR — A Canadian TV team originally Jews concluded the filming of an investigative movie in Pakhtoon areas of North West Pakistan. The team tried its best to amass the proofs and evidences which make the Jews originally Pakhtoon.

According to sources close to this team, who confirmed that all the members of this team were Jews and their director Symkha Jakomine, 45, was a Jew as well.

He is Romanian but migrated to Palestine. The team tried for months to get visas for entering into Pakistan, but the security authorities delayed it for a long time till they agreed later on.

A source who worked with the team, said that they came with a pre-planned idea and tried their best to prove that Afghans were Jews.

The source quoted one team worker as saying, "many tribes in the world were eager to be accepted as Jews, but we do not accept them easily, ut why you are not accepting this," he questioned.

Some Jew historians are of the opinion that the lost tribe went to Middle East and then proceeded to Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and India.

A source said we tried our best to convince them to go into Afghanistan and start probing there as well but they rejected the idea of Jews' Afghan origin

is only in Pakistani Pakhtoon, but not in Afghanistan".

According to a source the origin of Pakhtoon is controversial among the historians and writers and anthropologists.

Some say they are Aryans. The British governor in the area in the last century, Ol Caroe, who wrote a book *The Pathan*, tried to prove the Jews of Pakhtoon origin. Some Afghan historians and intellectuals believed that such as idea floated during the Mughal era, so they were too much against Pakhtoon, and they could not find a worse abuse than this.

The Mughal forced the writer Akhund Darwisa to write a book with the title of *Makhzan-i-Afghan* to introduce in it this idea.

After this, the conflict between Afghans and Iranians reached its climax, when the Iranian also followed the same loot of Mughal and they convinced Nehmatullah

Haravi from Herat to compile another book to back the same idea.

Preshan Khattak, a Pakhtoon historian who heads the Alkhair University Islamabad, in his book "Who are Pakhtoon" writes: The migration of Jews started from this area and not vice versa.

Zainay Hiwad Mel, a Pakhtoon historian, proved in his articles quoting Norwegian, British and Germans that the origin of Afghan is from Aryans and Sanskrit.

According to the Afghans and Pakistanis who were interviewed by the team, the latter focused on the similarities between the Jews and Afghans like 'Pakhto' where both Afghans and Jews are attaching themselves with it. While the word 'Pakhto' has been mentioned in the pre-Islamic Arabic poems. So why the Afghans are not saying we are Arabs.

However, there might be some words of Hebrew language used in Pakhto or Arabic due to the prominence of that language in that particular time.

Moreover, we have to point out that the film will be aired by Canadian films in the beginning of January next year.

Treaty banning mines carries no meaning for Afghans

FP 970919
KABUL (AFP) — A top Afghan mine clearance official has poured cold water on a draft treaty banning the use of anti-personnel mines, saying it will have little impact on continued use of the devices.

Farid Homayoun, Afghan head of the British HALO trust, said with major producers Russia, China and India keeping out of Wednesday's Oslo draft accord, mines will still be readily available and used.

"It sounds good, but it's just an impractical piece of A4 paper just like UN decisions," Homayoun commented. "This will not change the lives of the victims."

Some 100 countries have been associated with the draft treaty to be signed in early December, but sticking to the sidelines were China, India and Russia, all major producers and users of mines.

A US delegation pulled out of the landmines conference claiming defense commitments, in particular for the 37,000 US troops stationed in South Korea along the border with the North.

"Who cares if rich countries ban mines? Their products are too expensive anyway, and cheap Chinese, Indian and Russian mines are still available," Homayoun said.

He said each Chinese or Indian anti-personnel mine costs as little as 30 cents to buy and 100 dollars to clear, a "logical" weapon for the defensive needs of any army.

For countries like Afghanistan that are already mined this will have no effect, and it will only divert attention from the real problem which is the existing mines," Homayoun asserted.

UN estimates say Afghanistan is littered with up to 10 million mines, while the HALO trust says the true figure is somewhere between 600,000 and one million.

On an average 25 Afghans are killed or injured everyday by mines.

Homayoun said even if a complete ban was agreed, military scientists would develop a new and equally destructive weapon, but with a different name.

"Whatever is agreed, military forces will still use them: they need to defend themselves and millions of cheap stockpiled mines are easy to get on the black market," he said.

However one United Nations official was less pessimistic, calling the draft agreement a "first step" for the complete eradication of mines.

"It will not be easy to remove mines from all over the world, but this is only a first step and a beginning," said Tahsin Disbudak, head of the UN mine action center in Kabul.

He said the main benefit for Afghanistan would be increased international awareness of the mines problem, and hoped renewed enthusiasm would bring more funding for cash-strapped clearance operations.

"This is a big achievement for the time being, and the process will take a long time the same as it did for treaties on chemical, biological and atomic weapons," Disbudak explained.

"The pressure on Clinton is a clear sign of the importance of the issue," he added.

But echoing a generally cynical response here, a western UN source said the draft only represented a knee-jerk response to the death of anti-mine campaigner Diana, Princess of Wales, killed on August 31 in a car crash.

"It just looks like an over-emotional flood of political correctness brought on by Diana's death," said the source, who requested anonymity.

"Given time the people will forget about it and victims will keep being blown up."

Taliban forces take control of Hairatan

From *Khandaq-e-Umar*

PESHAWAR: True to their character, the Taliban bounced back Thursday after suffering setbacks earlier this week in the battle for Mazar-i-Sharif by taking total control of the key river-port of Hairatan on Afghanistan's border with Uzbekistan.

Independent sources, primarily aid workers stranded in the embattled city of Mazar-i-Sharif, confirmed that Hairatan had fallen to the Taliban. A BBC reporter, Monica Whitlock, reporting from Uzbekistan, also corroborated the Taliban claim of having taken the river-port, which is situated on the Amu Darya and controls the major supply route from Russia and Central Asia to Afghanistan.

The latest Taliban onslaught in northern Afghanistan also prompted leaders of the northern alliance to hold an emergency session in Pule Khumri in Baghlan province. Gen Malik, in an interview with BBC, said he, Prof Rabbani, who headed the ousted Afghan government, defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood and Karim Khalili, leader of Shiiie Herat-Wardak, decided to forge more unity in their ranks to fight the Taliban. He informed that a commission had also been formed to find a replacement for their late prime minister, Abdur Rahim Ghafoorza, who was killed in a recent air crash.

In reply to a question, Gen Malik claimed he had no differences with Dostum. "I talked to him on the phone and told him that he doesn't have to fear me. At this stage when we are battling the Taliban, it is necessary that everyone pick up a Kashmir to defend our nation and country," he stressed.

The Taliban offensive was led by commander Mulla Saddar and Muawin Salam. They reportedly first consolidated their positions on the intersection that leads to Hairatan from the main road between Tashkurgan and Mazar-i-Sharif and later went for the kill. The defenders of Hairatan, mainly ethnic Uzbeks, resisted briefly before either fleeing or surrendering. Their fellow Uzbeks from neighbouring Uzbekistan, which had sealed off its border with Afghanistan in May following the revolt against Dostum by his lieutenant Gen Abdul Malik and the Taliban, didn't interfere.

Beyond the Amu Darya and across the so-called Friendship Bridge, is the Uzbek city of Termez, which the UN and ICRC wanted to

Hekmatyar's two aides asked to leave Pakistan

From Peshawar, Nepal

PESHAWAR: Two prominent leaders of Gulbardin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami were Friday ordered to leave Pakistan within 24 hours.

The expulsion orders were served on Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal and Haji Mohammad Farid by an officer of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in Peshawar. No reason for the expulsion was given. When contacted, senior officials in the NWFP government said they were unaware of any such development.

Arghandiwal, who served as a finance minister in the ousted Rabbani government until the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in September last year, was given 24 hours to leave Pakistan after having been declared persona non grata. No reason was given in the expulsion order served on him by an officer of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

Among others, he is said to have contacted the Jamaat-i-Islami leader, Shabuddin Dilawar to help him in his bid. If his best ditch efforts to stay in Pakistan fail, he will have to leave the country by Sunday.

Arghandiwal was reluctant to talk when reached by The News on phone. However, he said he will abide by the orders and fly to Dubai Saturday morning, leaving his family behind. He was unsure of his final destination, though it is possible that he ends up in Iran where Hekmatyar took refuge sometime after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban.

When pressed, Arghandiwal said he wasn't told as to why he was being asked to leave Pakistan. "I don't know my crime. I have spent 20 years in Peshawar and have never done anything against Pakistan's interests," he argued. He claimed no decision was taken against Pakistan even in the recent Hezb-i-Islami central executive meeting held in Zahidan in Iran. "I attended that meeting and all we talked there was on ways and means to bring peace to Afghanistan," he informed.

Haji Farid was not available. However, Afghan sources said he didn't attend the party meeting in Iran but helped arrange Iranian visas for other Hezb-i-Islami delegates proceeding to Zahidan.

Both Arghandiwal and Haji Farid were issued with letters containing

the same message. The contents of the letters weren't revealed but they obviously ordered them to leave Pakistan within 24 hours. Arghandiwal was summoned Thursday and served the notice while Haji Farid was informed of his expulsion Friday.

The real cause of declaring the two Hezb-i-Islami persona non grata isn't clear but in the backdrop of Hekmatyar's prolonged stay in Iran and his recent statements it is possible that Pakistan government suspected that some of the party leaders were acting against Pakistan's interests. Islamabad wasn't pleased when Hekmatyar joined the Rabbani government as prime minister and later accused Pakistan of interfering in Afghanistan's affairs and supporting the Taliban.

A few months back, two Afghan mujahideen commanders, Haji Qadeer, who served as governor of Nangarhar before its fall to the Taliban, and Haji Mohammad Zamani were also ordered to leave Pakistan. At that time, the Taliban Islamic government had formally complained to the Pakistan government that the two commanders were spearheading an armed campaign against them in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces from Pakistan's soil.

UN staff airlifted from Mazar-i-Sharif

News 970921

Hezb leader leaves Pakistan

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The UN staff and foreign aid workers trapped in Afghanistan's beleaguered town of Mazar-i-Sharif were Saturday airlifted to Islamabad and Peshawar, a UN official said.

Meanwhile, Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, a leader of Gulbardin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami, left Peshawar for Dubai Saturday after being served an expulsion order by the Pakistan government.

Arghandiwal, who served as a finance minister in the ousted Rabbani government until the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in September last year, was given 24 hours to leave Pakistan after having been declared persona non grata. No reason was given in the expulsion order served on him by an officer of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

Arghandiwal was seen off at the Peshawar airport by Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) officials and some of his relations. He has already ob-

tained a visa for Iran and will proceed to Zahidan, where Hekmatyar is based after taking refuge in Iran.

He may try to shift his family from Peshawar to Iran later. His father, who is based in the US and is presently visiting Pakistan, will look after Arghandiwal's family during this period.

Haji Mohammad Farid, who is the second Hezb-i-Islami leader served with an expulsion order, hasn't yet left Pakistan.

He has been desperately trying to get his expulsion orders cancelled with the help of sympathetic Pakistani individuals and organizations, including Qazi Hussain Ahmad's Jamaat-i-Islami. Afghan sources said he has been allowed to stay a few more days in Pakistan to enable him to prepare for his journey.

They felt he will eventually have to leave Pakistan. But sources close to Haji Farid said he was hopeful that his expulsion order will be withdrawn.

Relief workers left the troubled region by helicopter for the town of Shibaqhan, west of Mazar, then went plane to Peshawar and Islamabad. Humanitarian sources said about half a dozen UN and Red Cross foreign workers had been left in the city despite the fighting in the region.

Taliban allay Uzbek fears: Afghan ambassador in Islamabad Maulvi Shahabuddin Dilawar has allayed Uzbek government fears that Taliban's recent military gains will pose any threat to Uzbekistan. Afghan sources said Sunday.

The Afghan envoy, who met his Uzbek counterpart in Islamabad, said that the Taliban believed in non-interference in internal affairs of other countries and want cordial relations with other states especially the neighbours. Afghan sources said.

The meeting followed the Uzbek government's claim that a number of rockets had landed near the Uzbek city of Termez when fighting was erupted between Taliban and opposition forces.

According to Afghanistan's official news agency Bakhsh, both the ambassadors discussed regional issues. Maulvi Dilawar talked about the latest political and military developments in Afghanistan. He denounced interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan by certain powers saying foreign intervention is the major cause of continuation of bloodshed in Afghanistan.

Taliban rivals claim retaking border town

KABUL (Agencies) — Forces were available. Meanwhile, the United Nations and the Red Cross Saturday evacuated more than 50 foreign aid workers from the embattled northern Afghan city.

However, Taliban sources in Islamabad immediately denied the claim, saying Taliban forces had repulsed an attack on the town after inflicting heavy casualties. Speaking from the northern operation base of Mazar-i-Sharif, a spokesman from the rival Hezb-i-Wahdat Shiite faction said "Taliban fighters had been pushed out of the dusty town center. Those parts of Hairatan which were controlled by the 70th division had been captured by the Taliban but they were pushed out," the Wahdat official, who declined to give his name, claimed.

Hairatan, a key town on the Uzbekistan border located on the banks of the Amu Darya (Oxus river), fell to the Taliban early Thursday.

The spokesman said "a major part of Hairatan" was back in opposition hands, without giving details on when the counter attack took place. He said the disputed area was quiet throughout most of Sunday.

A Taliban official quoted by the Pakistan based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said Hairatan was still in the hands of Islamic militia.

Independent sources confirmed that Mazar-i-Sharif — the seat of the and-Taliban alliance's shadow government — was peaceful during the day, adding that frontlines within 35 kilometers east of the city were inactive.

No further details on developments either in Hairatan — situated 80 kilometers north of Mazar-i-Sharif — or to the west of the city

Taliban claim gains near Mazar-i-Sharif

News 97-09-26

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The Taliban on Thursday claimed military gains in northern Afghanistan near Mazar-i-Sharif.

Their spokesman in Peshawar said the Taliban and their allied forces had captured Shortapa and Sharak districts as they tightened their hold around Mazar-i-Sharif.

Sources in the Afghan consulate in Peshawar said the Taliban seized three jeeps, six pieces of heavy artillery and four tanks in the fighting and captured 50 soldiers. They said Qazi Amir Jan, a commander of Uzbek warlord Gen Rasheed Dostum, was also captured.

Qazi Amir Jan is a deputy of Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) commander Junaid Khan Hamidard, who has remained loyal to Dostum and had some support in Balkh town and its suburbs.

The claims couldn't be confirmed

from independent sources.

Meanwhile, a report reaching Peshawar said the Taliban and their local allies had made advances towards Mazar-i-Sharif from the Balkh and Yangi Qila side after making gains on the frontline. It claimed some defenders of Mazar-i-Sharif had fled the city in two helicopters to Bamian, the stronghold of the Shia Hezb-i-Wahdat party of Karim Khalili. Anti-Taliban dismissed these claims and termed it wishful thinking.

Meanwhile, Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Malik has made a renewed call for a united front against the Taliban and urged the people of northern Afghanistan not to lose this last opportunity to defeat the Taliban. In an interview, he pledged to fight the Taliban until the end.

On the other hand, a jirga of tribal elders from North and South Waziristan agencies in Makin vowed to launch a peace mission to put an end

to the bloodshed in Afghanistan.

The meeting, presided by freedom fighter Faqir of Ipli's grandson, Niaz Ali Khan, urged both the Taliban and their opponents to agree to the tribal peace mission instead of allowing outsiders and vested interests to advance their cause. They also called upon the Pakistan government to extend support to their peace mission. AFP adds: Fierce artillery exchanges between Taliban forces and their northern opponents pounded areas close to Mazar-i-Sharif early Thursday, independent sources said.

Taliban fighters positioned within 35 kilometers east of the city kept up a barrage of heavy fire from dawn to mid-morning, but neither side appeared to win any gains from the battle, the sources said. They said a number of rockets and shells struck areas in the eastern and southern edges of Mazar-i-Sharif, which is the only Afghan city not held by the Tal-

iban and the opposition alliance seat of shadow government.

No further details on the exact location to the north or east of the city were immediately available.

Although Taliban fighters have not yet entered the dusty northern city, the main opposition supply route to frontlines north of the Afghan capital remain blocked.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi Wednesday hinted at initiating fresh peace efforts in Afghanistan. He voiced Iran's readiness to settle Afghan issue through talks after his meeting with UN General Secretary Kofi Annan.

He said Iran in cooperation with the UN will try to encourage the Afghan groups forces to reconcile. The foreign minister pledged that Iran will continue its efforts to end Afghan crisis and welcome assistance of other countries.

Taliban ask three UN officials to leave Afghanistan

From Rahimullah Yusufi

weren't aware that a young Western woman was also a part of the UNHCR delegation that had reached Kandahar for the meeting and were, therefore, surprised by her presence. However, he said the Taliban officials found a way out by suggesting that she attend the meeting and talk to them from behind a curtain.

Confirming the incident, a senior Taliban leader Mullah Wakil Ahmad told The News from Kandahar that the three men staged a walkout even though it was agreed upon by them as well as the visiting lady that she would speak while seated behind a curtain.

He said Governor of Kandahar, Mullah Muhammad Hasan Rahmat, ordered their expulsion from Kandahar because they insulted the Taliban leaders and officials drawn from several government departments by walking out of the meeting.

Their conduct was unbecoming of UN officials as the customs and traditions of the host country ought to be respected by all foreigners working there. They violated the UN charter and tried to insult the officials of the Islamic government of Afghanistan," he argued.

One of the three UN officials ordered expulsion from Afghanistan could not be ascertained immediately. Efforts to establish contact with UN authorities to seek their release could also not be materialised, primarily due to the fact that Sunday was a closed holiday.

According to Mullah Wakil, the meeting in Kandahar was held to prepare plans for rehabilitating Afghan refugees who were repatriating to their homeland from Pakistan and other countries.

He said most participants

were reportedly based in Kandahar, staged the walkout to protest the treatment meted out by Taliban to their female colleague. One of them was in charge of the demining project and the remaining two were working with other UN-assisted projects.

The woman in the delegation was reportedly an international lawyer who came to brief Taliban officials on the rights of refugees. She hailed from one of the Scandinavian countries.

Mullah Wakil, who is a close confidant of Taliban supremo Mullah Mohammad Omar, also wondered why was a young woman included in the delegation visiting Kandahar given the Taliban's sensitivity on the issue of women.

He said the UN and others would have made a hue and cry over the expulsion of three of their officials had they not been at fault in this particular case.

"They didn't even give it in the media as they had no valid defence in this case. No protest was made to us because what the three men did was indefensible," he maintained.

Rivals mount fresh offensive on Taliban

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Heavy fighting erupted near the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif Tuesday as, opposition troops launched a major offensive against Taliban militia frontlines, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

In a separate incident, two Taliban jets carried out an air raid on the headquarters of the opposition Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat group in the central city of Bamiyan, the Pakistan-based AIP said.

Fighting raged near Shahruk and Shapirak districts, 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) northeast of Mazar-i-Sharif, the agency said, adding eight Taliban fighters had died.

Six opposition fighters were killed and 25 injured, the report said.

No independent confirmation was immediately available.

Independent observers in Mazar-i-Sharif reported sounds of heavy artillery duels but the exact location of the fighting was not clear.

Fighting was also going on at the so-called Old Road, leading to the key river port of Hairatan, east of Mazar-i-Sharif, which fell to the

Islamic militia last week, AIP reported.

Opposition sources claimed they had recaptured Hairatan on Sunday but Taliban officials insisted the port, on the Oxus river which forms the border between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, was still in their hands.

AIP said the attack, mounted after reinforcements arrived from central Bamiyan province, held by an opposition ally Hezb-i-Wahdat, was aimed at flushing out the Taliban fighters from a key intersection leading to Mazar-i-Sharif and Hairatan.

Meanwhile, the Taliban launched an air raid on the central city of Bamiyan, injuring four people, AIP said.

Two Taliban jets attacked the city around 12:00 p.m. local time (07:30 GMT) and dropped four bombs.

A Hezb-i-Wahdat spokesman quoted by AIP in Pakistan, said the jets attacked the group's headquarters but there were no casualties in the building.

No independent confirmation of the attack was immediately available.

come in just one meeting.

The latest Taliban victories on the battleground came after two days of intense fighting. Afghan sources said the latest offensive by the Taliban and their allies began Monday afternoon and brought them to the airport as well as to the city's outskirts. A general amnesty declared by the Taliban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar on Sunday is said to have left an impact with some opposition commanders and soldiers deciding to surrender to the Taliban.

Reports said the situation in Mazar-i-Sharif was tense and uncertain with many families fleeing the city. Chaos was witnessed in the city as the central authority collapsed and armed bands indulged in looting and harassment of civilians.

Dostum, who returned to Afghanistan recently after a four-month self-exile in Turkey, had earlier abandoned Mazar-i-Sharif to head for Bamiyan. He held talks with Karim Khalili before returning to his native Shiberghan, capital of Jauzjan province presently in control of Gen Malik. It is said Dostum met Malik in Shiberghan and reportedly decided to pool their resources to save their bases and towns from falling into Taliban hands. However, differences between the two Uzbek warlords were said to be so acute and personal that a rapprochement between them was being mentioned only as a remote possibility.

The deep distrust that characterises their relations, according to observers, is unlikely to be over-

come of the city and the Taliban were in high spirits after their initial military advances.

He denied claims by Gen Dostum that his men had beaten back the Taliban and their local allies in the Chamtal and Charbolak districts near Mazar-i-Sharif.

In an interview with BBC, Dostum claimed his and the opposition's forces had recaptured areas earlier lost to the Taliban. He maintained that Chamtal and Charbolak were now in opposition hands. He said if a need arose, he and other opposition leaders would shift to Hezb-i-Wahdat stronghold of Bamiyan in central Afghanistan and continue their resistance against the Taliban.

Kabul crackdown on beard trimmers

KABUL (AFP) — Afghanistan's Taliban have punished 16 men who breached religious law by trimming their compulsory beards, state-run radio Shariat announced Tuesday.

"Sixteen men who had trimmed their beards contrary to Islamic Shariat were given Shariat punishment by the personnel of the department for the suppression of vice and promotion of virtue," the radio said.

The report did not specify what punishment the beard trimmers received, but anti-vice officials say a brief and symbolic beating with a lengthy rubber hose is the usual action.

"Also a taxi driver who was carrying a number of women who had not properly observed the headscarf was imprisoned for 48 hours," the report added.

"In the course of their patrol operations in various parts of Kabul city the department teams invited people to observe virtue and abstain from vice," it said.

The Taliban have set up a permanent beard inspection post — made up of around six fighters — outside the ministry of justice on a busy roundabout, residents reported.

The Taliban's minister of justice, Mullah Nurrudin Turabi, won fame throughout Kabul when he personally supervised the mass roundup of 700 bus passengers in a town near Kabul who had trimmed their beards.

As part of the Taliban's quest for a nation of beards, locals say he has set up a dedicated post outside his office.

Male pedestrians are now subject to routine inspections, and if caught with unsatisfactory levels of facial hair, are summoned into the ministry compound and given a lashing by zealous militiamen.

"In future I will not dare pass that roundabout because I cannot bear the humiliation," commented one local victim of the check-post.

According to Taliban religious scholars, rules regarding beard lengths come from the "Sunnat," or examples of the Muslim prophet Muhammad.

As part of the Taliban's aim to establish a "pure Islamic state," radio Shariat has announced the arrest, punishment or sacking from government posts of at least 1,200 alleged beard trimmers in and around Kabul.

This is the second time in about two weeks time that the Taliban have captured the Mazar-i-Sharif airport, located about 20 kilometers east of the city centre. They reportedly held the airport for a few days the last time before retreating in the face of a counter-attack by the anti-Taliban alliance comprising the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat led by Karim Khalili, Ahmad Shah Masood's Shura-i-Nazar, and the two antagonistic factions of Junbush-i-Milli Islami of Uzbek warlords Gen Abdul Rasheed Dostum and Gen Abdul Malik.

The latest battle for the airport is said to have caused 12 deaths, including three Taliban fighters. Mulla Wakil Ahmad, a senior Taliban leader, speaking from the movement's headquarters in Kandahar, said their forces captured Mazar-i-Sharif airport and other key installations near it following a massive, three-pronged attack. He said fighting was raging on the outskirts

Taliban capture Mazar airport

News 970930

From Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: The Taliban continued to gain ground in their offensive on Mazar-i-Sharif when their forces captured the airport and certain key installations Monday on the outskirts of the city.

Certain reports said the Taliban and their allies were now a mere five kilometers from the city centre and were drawing closer. Independent sources, based in Mazar-i-Sharif, said firing by light weapons was now clearly audible in the city. Heavy rocket and artillery fire by the Taliban and their allied forces was targeting some of the outlying parts of the sprawling city.

Taliban detain EU official for three hours

News 970930

No one allowed to break laws, says commander

ISLAMABAD: European Union (EU) Commissioner for humanitarian aid Emma Bonino returned to Islamabad late Monday from Kabul where she and her entourage were detained by Taliban authorities for over three hours for taking pictures of women.

Bonino did not speak to journalists present at Islamabad airport and drove to her hotel. The journalists arrested with her included a CNN team led by Christiane Amanpour, a French television crew from Canal Plus, a British journalist and two Italian photographers.

AFP report from Kabul said the head of the Taliban's detection section, Haji Habibullah had said that the delegation had filmed and taken photographs of women while on a guided tour of a women's hospital.

"This is just to convey to them that they cannot break the law," he said, adding the male director of the hospital had raised the alarm.

However, Habibullah appeared unconcerned of the identity of his prisoner and said he was proud of his

catch. "I myself brought them in my pick-up," he boasted, "they were taking pictures of Muslim women."

In areas under Taliban control both the photography and filming of "living creatures" is strictly banned.

According to several aid workers, the incident escalated when the CNN crew attempted to pass off a blank video cassette to angered officials at the hospital, following complaints over the open use of their cameras.

"Everybody knows the rules regarding video here, and not even CNN are above them," one foreign aid worker told AFP.

"What they (CNN) do not realise is that even with Bonino they are not above the vice and virtue laws," another complained.

"They may have got good TV, but I hope they have not ruined the chances of European funding for suffering Afghan's by causing an international stink," she said.

Nine vehicles, and equipment

taken from the journalists were returned, but video tapes from both television crews were confiscated.

Sources in the delegation told AFP Sunday the trip was aimed at raising concerns over the Taliban's strict restrictions on women who have been banned from working and education and forced to wear a chaddar covering the entire body.

Earlier, before leaving for Islamabad Emma Bonino accused Taliban of inflicting a "reign of terror". Bonino claimed she was threatened with a Kalashnikov rifle and several of her group were beaten on the back with the weapons.

"This is an example of how people live here — under a reign of terror" she said. "I have just had a meeting with foreign affairs officials and they said they were sorry for the incident and I said I was too," a defiant Bonino added.

"I was trying to keep hold of my bag and was threatened with a Kalashnikov — I had the feeling no-one was in charge and I was very scared, nobody knows the rules here. These religious police who drive around just make up their own rules."

Bonino said that during her detention she was scared that the situation would "escalate not on our side but on

their side." In Brussels, the European Commission on Monday attempted to prevent the arrest blowing up into a major diplomatic incident, while German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel slammed the Taliban over the incident.

"This is an act of cynical contempt towards the European Union and a slap in the face for all those who want to help the people of Afghanistan," Kinkel said in a statement.

The incident displayed the Taliban's "grotesque attitude," to women, he added. But Brussels played down the incident.

"This may well have been a banal incident that had nothing to do with the personality of Mrs. Bonino," chief spokesman Klaus van der Pas said.

"It may have been more than that but we'd like to know more before making any statement," he added. Van der Pas said Bonino's team had received apologies from the Afghan foreign ministry and ruled out any move to suspend EU humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. —AFP

Chamal and other key installations after intense fighting.

There were also reports that the opposition had mobilised troops and launched an attack on the Taliban and their allies from the Shilberghan side. This onslaught was said to have slowed down the Taliban advance on Mazar-i-Sharif from Balkh town side. Taliban jets also bombed Mazar-i-Sharif Tuesday to punish the city's defenders. Both Mulla Wakil and Said Ahmad Mubariz confirmed that bombing had taken place through they gave different reasons. The former said only military targets are being hit as a retaliation for bombing raids carried out by opposition aircraft. The latter termed them as an effort to terrorise the people.

Taliban information minister Amir Khan Mutaqi said in Kabul opposition fighters wanting to escape could use the southern exit of Mazar-i-Sharif to leave the city and seek refuge in opposition-held Bamian province by walking across the Darra-i-Suf mountains.

According to the other Taliban spokesman based in Peshawar, Kabul and Kandahar, their forces captured the strategic customs house sited three kilometres from the city centre and reached the Jamhoori Gate later Tuesday evening.

Meanwhile, all efforts to find the truth behind the rumour that Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Malik was killed in Shilberghan Tuesday. There were a number of theories including one that Gen Dostum had got him poisoned. This and other such rumours and claims couldn't be readily confirmed.

Taliban claim more gains

From Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: The battle for Mazar-i-Sharif continued Tuesday with the Taliban claiming further military gains and offering opposition fighters an escape route from the embattled city in northern Afghanistan.

On the other hand, a senior Taliban leader disclosed that European Union commissioner for humanitarian affairs, Emma Bonino, and her entourage would have been tried for violating rules prohibiting filming in Afghanistan had she not been paraded by the Taliban Islamic movement founder, Mulla Mohammad Omar. He called Bonino an anti-Taliban conspirator who aimed at denying the Afghanistan seat in the UN General Assembly to the Taliban so that the ousted Taliban government would continue to hold it. He remarked that Bonino was one of the selfish people in the world who create evil and corruption.

Bonino, who on Tuesday paid a flying visit to Badakhshan province capital, Faizabad, to meet former president Burhanuddin Rabbani, was also criticised by the Taliban information minister Mulla Amir Khan Mutaqi. He said it was the fault of Bonino and her entourage that they took pictures in violation of government regulations. He said the delegation would not have faced problems had its members not taken pictures. He argued that the delegation were fully aware of the Taliban policy of banning the filming and photography of

all living creatures. He also disputed claims that Bonino and her delegation were threatened, detained or beaten up.

Earlier on Monday, it was reported from Kabul that Bonino and officials, aid workers and journalists accompanying her, were detained by the Taliban for three hours and 40 minutes after being caught filming in a women's hospital. Bonino, prior to her departure for Pakistan Monday, had termed her ordeal as an example of the Taliban's "reign of terror."

According to Mulla Abbas, Bonino was warned by the head of the hospital that police would be called unless members of her delegation stopped filming women. He argued that the delegation members were unsterilized and were walking around in the hospital in violation of medical norms. The Taliban and their opponents again made conflicting claims Tuesday with regard to the fighting near Mazar-i-Sharif. Taliban spokesman Mulla Wakil Ahmad said their forces were still holding the Mazar-i-Sharif airport, Chamal and Rocket Ghund and had made further advances overnight and Friday. He rejected opposition claims that the Taliban had been pushed back and said the anti-Taliban alliance was trying to raise the morale of its demobilised troops by making false claims.

Syed Aljumad Mubariz, a leader of the Shiite Harkat-i-Islami and spokesman for the anti-Taliban alliance, claimed their troops had captured the Mazar-i-Sharif airport,

Bonino says Taliban apologised, incident closed

ISLAMABAD: European Union Commissioner Emma Bonino said Tuesday the Taliban regime in Afghanistan had tendered apologies to her over her detention in Kabul and the incident is closed.

Bonino, a Commissioner for humanitarian aid, was held for several hours on Monday by the Taliban

after members of her entourage visiting Kabul to assess the aid situation took pictures of women.

Speaking at a news conference in, she said the detention of herself and her entourage in a police station in Kabul on Monday was the result of some "misunderstanding" between the Afghan religious police and reporters accompanying her.

The incident which occurred Monday in Kabul Polyclinic, and which led to the detention of my delegation in forced custody by the religious police for more than three hours had its origin in a misunderstanding between our press people and local authorities," she said.

However, Bonino said, "the incident was closed with the apologies of two members of the Taliban administration and I do not want to dramatise or dwell further on it."

She said the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) would continue to give assistance to war-ravaged Afghanistan "provided this aid is administered freely, without harassment."

Bonino, who visited Taliban-held Kabul and the opposition-controlled northern city of Faizabad in Badakhshan province, said she felt there was a "real need" to keep international humanitarian aid for the people of Afghanistan at least at the current level.

"I take the commitment that this will be the case as far as ECHO is concerned provided, of course, that this aid can be administered freely, without harassment, and in accordance with international humanitarian

conventions," she stressed.

Bonino said she admired the people of Afghanistan, "for their endurance, and their capacity to survive and even develop their skills in a country ravaged by war for almost 20 years.

She underlined that "harassment" was part of the daily life of people in Kabul including the expatriate staff engaged in humanitarian aid.

"Random checks and arbitrary arrests are a fact of life in the capital, and so are public beatings for non-compliance" with the Taliban dress codes or "beard standards," she said. She was alluding to reports that the regime punishes people who trim their beards.

Bonino said she had no doubt the code of conduct and the style of life imposed by the Taliban was "resented" by all those Afghans who do not share Pashtun culture and tradition.

tions, as "abusive and oppressive."

She stressed the European Union will "never acquiesce in this reality" and hoped the entire UN system will remain committed to upholding the basic principles on human rights.

Bonino said no military solution will bring lasting peace in Afghanistan.

"The roots of Afghanistan's problems are political and they need a political solution, involving all interested regional and outer powers," she observed.—AFP

Our Peshawar Bureau reports. Head of UN Special Mission for Afghanistan Dr Norbert Holl expressed his deep regret at the incident which led to the temporary detention of Ms. Bonino and her delegation by the authorities in Kabul and felt that such unwelcome development had really marred relations between the Taliban and European Union.

Dr. Holl met Emma Bonino, in Peshawar Tuesday evening and discussed the incident. The UN diplomat regretted that the incident jeopardized a personality enjoying diplomatic immunity and representing the European Union. Ms. Bonino, he said, had come to Afghanistan on purely humanitarian grounds in order to collect first hand information on the economic, social and human rights situation in Afghanistan, including the situation of women.

It may be recalled the the EU and its member states are largest donor to Afghanistan. During the meeting Dr Holl apprised the lady of the current political and military situation of Afghanistan and also extended full support to the humanitarian task of Ms Bonino.

UNSC calls for Afghan truce

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The UN Security Council on Tuesday called for a ceasefire in the Afghan conflict and urged outside states to stop interfering.

Tajikistan's President Emomali Rakhmonov meanwhile in a speech to the UN General Assembly urged Russia and the United States to "play a decisive part in the Afghan settlement in the nearest future."

Security Council president Bill Richardson told reporters here that Council members were "gravely concerned at the continuation of armed conflict in Afghanistan and the danger it poses to the region."

He spoke after UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi briefed the Council on latest developments in Afghanistan, where the Taliban Islamic militants are fighting for control of the north-

ern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Brahimi made it clear that ending the conflict depended on the Afghan parties themselves. Richardson said. But the envoy also pointed out that the war was "fuelled from the outside."

"Members of the Council called on all states to refrain from any action that would be inconsistent with the search for peace," Richardson said.

The Council, in addition to the ceasefire call, also demanded "concrete steps by all parties" to guarantee the safety of international personnel.

Referring to Monday's brief detention in Kabul of European Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs Emma Bonino, Richardson said that such moves would prevent the recurrence of incidents.

Bonino was held for several hours by the Taliban after mem-

bers of her entourage visiting Kabul to assess the aid situation took pictures of women.

A report from Kabul said Taliban forces battling for control of the northern Afghan opposition stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif have offered enemy fighters an unhindered escape from the city, an official said Tuesday.

The militia's minister for information and culture, Amir Khan Muttaqi, said the besieging army had deliberately left open the southern exit of the city to facilitate a peaceful takeover.

"We are trying to further tighten our net so the opposition are compelled to leave," Muttaqi said. "They can escape south to Bamian through Dar-i-Sul without problems."

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported Tuesday that the Taliban had captured the vital customs house close to the city.

Taliban defend themselves amid protests at UN

News 97/1002

From Afzim M Milani

AFGHANISTAN: It looks like there was 'Afghanistan day' at the UN. Outside across the street anti-Taliban rally was held by a handful of Afghans, Taliban representative Abdul Hakeem Mujahid held a crowded press conference at the UN Correspondents Association's Club.

The UN Ambassador and President of UN Security Council for the month of September, Bill Richardson, impressed upon all Afghan parties for the safety of international personnel. The UN Security Council issued a warning to Taliban, following the brief detention on Monday of humanitarian delegation led by European Union Commissioner Emma Bonino and reports that Taliban have apologized for the incident.

Bill Richardson said that Security Council wants "concrete steps by all parties to guarantee the safety of all International personnel to avoid any such detentions in future. The UN Secretary General's special envoy to Afghanistan is here at the UN and he reported that Mazar-e-Sharif may soon fall to Taliban who already control 90 per cent of Afghan territory. Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, argued against tough Islamic laws of the Taliban and stressed for "more moderate interpretation of Islam" which could be "compatible with the role and human rights of women."

The focus of the press was at the UN Correspondents Association Club, where Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, ambassador-designate of the Taliban government to the UN, held a largely attended press conference. He strongly protested the representation of Rabbani regime at the UN as government of Afghanistan.

Accompanied and assisted by a woman Laila Helms, Mujahid said: "We strongly protest the representation of Afghanistan by the personal representatives of Rabbani. Nobody even knows where he is in Afghanistan." He also countered the reports of poor record of women's rights under Taliban and claimed "women are living free in Afghanistan, without any problems." About the reports that Taliban are denying women education and job rights, as false, he referred to a report by the Swedish non-governmental organization *Frontline* which asserted that Taliban held territory of Kandahar on September 28 to obtain additional information from the Governor on the events that took place on September 23-24. It stressed that the withdrawal of the three international staff from the meeting hall of the UNHCR office in Kandahar on September 23 conformed with standing instruction of the UN agencies for Afghanistan, which require equal treatment of men and women in all UN-sponsored meetings.

According to the UNOCHA statement, the meeting took place on UN premises which are extra-territorial and, in accordance with international agreement, such rules and regulations as are designed by the UN will apply there.

These rules stipulate that there will be no discrimination with regard to gender. It claimed the Kandahar authorities were advised well ahead of the meeting that female staff would be present and that the protection officer who was to present

Laila Helms, who accompanied the Taliban's designate ambassador to the UN generated interest among reporters through her defense of Taliban government. She claimed that women's education and freedom of movement has been improved under Taliban, specially in rural areas.

She complained that most of foreign reporters are based in Kabul and did not see this change. Laila Helms argued that even in Kabul Taliban were moving to rebuild girls schools after receiving a donation from the government of Norway. She said that the whole issue was about the gas pipeline and the issue of women rights are a smoke-screen for government's strategic concerns in opposing Taliban. "The whole thing is about the pipeline... it has nothing to do with human rights, women rights." She alleged that Western countries "never made a peep when women were being killed during fighting by Rabbani's forces and those of former prime minister Gulbadin Hikmatyar.

Some foreign oil companies including the US-based UNOCAL, are still bidding for gas pipeline through Afghanistan, despite serious criticism against Taliban and their human rights policies. Laila said that UNOCAL remains "very persistent" in their project to build the gas pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan. Meanwhile, the UN credential committee is about to hold its meeting but Taliban are not likely to get the UN seat although they hold 90 per cent Afghan territory and have been controlling Kabul for the last one year.

UN concerned over Kandahar expulsions

News 97/1001

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The United Nations Tuesday made it clear it would continue to maintain the principle of gender equity in Afghanistan despite the expulsion of three of its international staff members by the Taliban authorities from Kandahar.

A statement issued by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) expressed concern over the expulsion orders and sought to clarify the UN stance on the issue. It noted that the expulsion order was not transmitted through official channels of the Taliban movement's foreign affairs ministry but were rather handed over by the Governor of Kandahar province. It said clarification on the issue was being sought from the foreign ministry.

The statement said a mission led by the acting UN coordinator for humanitarian affairs was sent to Kandahar

on September 28 to obtain additional information from the Governor on the events that took place on September 23-24. It stressed that the withdrawal of the three international staff from the meeting hall of the UNHCR office in Kandahar on September 23 conformed with standing instruction of the UN agencies for Afghanistan, which require equal treatment of men and women in all UN-sponsored meetings.

According to the UNOCHA statement, the meeting took place on UN premises which are extra-territorial and, in accordance with international agreement, such rules and regulations as are designed by the UN will apply there.

These rules stipulate that there will be no discrimination with regard to gender. It claimed the Kandahar authorities were advised well ahead of the meeting that female staff would be present and that the protection officer who was to present

the refugee amnesty issue was an international female staff member. It said arrangements for the presentation were agreed upon by the Governor's office ahead of time and no request was made that she speak from behind a screen. It contended that the departure of the three UN staff members from the meeting room was spontaneous and was in no way intended to cause offence.

The UNOCHA statement claimed the UN principle that all men and women are equal was infringed upon in Kandahar on September 23 but the UNHCR legal officer still agreed to speak from behind a screen in order to guarantee that her message on amnesty law and its implications was heard. It said she did so under protest and made a statement to this effect at the meeting. It said UN staff have standing instructions to cancel or otherwise withdraw from meetings in which discriminatory practices are applied.

Opposition re-takes control of Mazar airport

1005

ISLAMABAD: Opposition forces seized control of the strategic Mazar-i-Sharif airport in northern Afghanistan after brief clashes with Taliban troops late Saturday, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

The Pakistan-based agency said Taliban officials admitted the capture of the airport by opposition troops claiming the Islamic militia "withdrew" voluntarily. Taliban forces had seized the airport after a dramatic advance towards the opposition stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif last month. Independent confirmation was not immediately available and the private news service gave no further details.

It said the fighting was brief and details of any losses were not immediately known.

The Taliban have now retreated towards Hairatan junction some 20 kilometers east of Mazar-i-Sharif, the report said. The report came as opposition fighters earlier partly broke the Taliban siege of their stronghold by clearing areas to the south and west of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Independent sources in Kabul told AFP a vast area to west of the dusty city — previously held by local turnout commanders — had returned to the beleaguered alliance early in the day.

They said the road west to the town of Balkh, situated 18 kilometers to the west, was fully open to both civilian and military traffic, while the southern exit had also reopened.

The areas fell into de facto Taliban hands when they attacked the city over three weeks ago employing the support of commanders

from the Hezb-i-Islami faction, which like the Taliban is dominated by ethnic Pashtuns.—AIP

Our Peshawar Bureau reports: Our Peshawar Bureau reports: The anti-Taliban forces claimed Saturday that they had scored important military victories in Kunar province in eastern Afghanistan.

However, the claims were denied by the Taliban. A spokesman of the opposition said fighters led by Commander Jelaluddin Khan had wrested control of Devgal, Chowk and Narang districts in Kunar from

progress in Shigrai area. He claimed 15 Taliban were captured and 18 killed in the fighting. He also claimed one Taliban tank and five military vehicles were destroyed.

The spokesman said their men led by commander Najmuddin was ready to launch attacks against the Taliban in the Pech valley in Kunar. He said commanders Hazrat Ali and Maulvi Aslam were preparing fresh offensives in the Nurgal/Mazar valleys while commander Malik Zarin had started firing rockets on Taliban positions in the Asmar district. Moreover, he said Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar) commander Kashmir Khan too was planning to join the battle against the Taliban in Kunar. He said the Taliban were under great pressure after the recent opposition military operations.

But the Taliban dismissed the opposition claims and said the military situation in Kunar hasn't changed. They said the Taliban were fully in control of the situation and were capable of defending Kunar province.

Taliban suffer losses close to Mazar-i-Sharif

KABUL (AFP) — Taliban forces battling for control of the northern Afghan opposition base of Mazar-i-Sharif have lost ground following a night of intense clashes, sources said Thursday.

After a huge overnight battle lasting at least nine hours, anti-Taliban alliance fighters advanced by around three kilometers to the east of the city, independent sources said.

They said the frontlines — which had quietened down by early Thursday evening — were now slightly beyond the city airport, and around 19 kilometers of the city center.

A spokesman for the opposition Hezb-i-Wahdat Shiite faction said Tuesday Hairatan and outlying areas were taken by the alliance forces in a cleanup operation following an attack from three directions.

However, Taliban forces still control key areas to the north and east of the city, and in the past four weeks of fighting there have successfully bounced back from similar losses.

The sources based in Mazar-i-Sharif — the only Afghan city not held by the hardline Taliban — said intense fighting overnight continued until morning, allowing residents little sleep.

Aid sources added that at least 100 local civilians had been seriously injured in the past three days of heavy clashes, which have included a heavy bombardment of Mazar-i-Sharif by Taliban artillery and rockets.

FP 971003

Iran to give Taliban rivals MiG-21s

DUBAI (AFP) — Iran is preparing to supply the anti-Taliban forces of ousted Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani with nearly 20 MiG-21 fighter planes belonging to Iraq, the Arabic newspaper Al-Hayat said Wednesday.

The London-based daily said the MiG-21s were among the planes which Iraq flew to safety in Iran at the start of the 1991 Gulf War over Kuwait.

"Tehran has painted the planes in the Afghan colours," Al-Hayat said, adding that Afghan forces had been using MiG-21s since their battle against the Soviet occupation in the 1980s.

Iraq says it flew 115 fighter planes and 33 other aircraft to Iran in January 1991 to protect them from US-led allied raids. But Tehran insists it has 22 Iraqi aircraft which could be returned to Baghdad at the UN's request.

Tehran is opposed to the Islamic Taliban militia which has held Kabul for a year and controls around two-thirds of

Afghanistan.

A report from Kabul said: Sporadic fighting continued Wednesday close to the northern Afghan anti-Taliban base of Mazar-i-Sharif but with no side appearing to make any gains, sources reported.

Independent sources said occasional bouts of artillery and rocket fire could be heard close to the city, but added the frontlines to the east remained static.

The frontlines were reported to be still situated around a major road junction within 35 kilometers to the east.

No further details were immediately available, and no senior faction officials — from either the Taliban or the opposition alliance — could be reached.

Taliban spokesman Mullah Haqqani told the Afghan Islamic Press the withdrawal had been completed peacefully without any fighting.

A spokesman for the opposition Hezb-i-Wahdat Shiite faction said Tuesday Hairatan and outlying areas were taken by the alliance forces in a cleanup operation following an attack from three directions.

atation following an attack from three directions.

The dusty town is situated a mere 60 kilometers north of Mazar-i-Sharif, and fell back into alliance hands after they succeeded in clearing areas to the west and north of their base.

Earlier, the Taliban said Wednesday their forces had withdrawn from the key Afghan border town of Hairatan, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

AIP quoted a Taliban spokesman, Mullah Haqqani, as saying the Taliban withdrew from the town — which the anti-Taliban opposition claimed to have recaptured Tuesday — in a "tactical move."

Haqqani told the Pakistan-based information service the withdrawal had been completed peacefully without any fighting.

A spokesman for the opposition Hezb-i-Wahdat Shiite faction said Tuesday Hairatan and outlying areas were taken by the alliance forces in a cleanup operation following an attack from three directions.

(S)

Masood releases nine Pak prisoners

News 971008

From Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Nine Pakistanis, captured by Afghan military commander, Ahmad Shah Masood, have reached home after spending various terms of imprisonment in Panjsher valley.

They crossed over to Pakistan on Saturday before heading for their hometowns in NWFP and

Punjab. All were freed after furnishing guarantees that they would again never enter Afghanistan to take part in fighting. They were handed over to their relatives, who had left Pakistan on September 18 and travelled all the way to Panjsher to secure their release.

he wanted Afghanistan's Muslim neighbours to jointly campaign for an end to the civil war in his country.

Regretting the mujahideen fighting which destroyed Afghanistan and dashed hopes for establishment of an Islamic government, he felt inexperience, lust for power and foreign interference led to failure of efforts to bring unity in mujahideen ranks and restore durable peace. But he asserted that peace and Islamic Shariah would eventually come to Afghanistan and those on the right path among the warring Afghan groups would succeed.

Condemning outside interference in Afghanistan, he denied having received assistance from Iran on an individual basis while in exile in Mashhad and maintained that Tehran assisted the then Afghan government headed by president Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Those freed included Qari Qasim Farooq and Syed Mohammad Ali Shah from Rahimyar Khan, Rana Qurban from Faisalabad, Iftikhar Ahmad from Dera Ismail Khan, Ehsanullah from Swat, and Shaukat Hayat, Mohammad Zahir, Islam Wazir and Noor Mohammad from Dir district. Along with 13 Pakistanis, who had gone to Afghanistan to fetch them, the 22-member group walked for seven hours across dangerous frontlines of the Taliban and Masood's forces in Nijrab and Tagao areas of Kapisa province to reach Sarobi for onward journey to Peshawar via Jalalabad and Torkham.

Not all the 13 Pakistanis, who travelled to Panjsher looking for their near and dear ones, were lucky. Maulana Gul Rahman of Peshawar, who served as the group's guide and was on his second trip to Panjsher, failed to find his missing son, Afzal Hussain. Faisalabad's Rana Farman Ali, on the other hand, was lucky as he was able to trace his brother Rana Qurban and secure his release. Dera Ismail Khan's Qari Naimatullah and Qari Mukhtar Ahmad also returned as happy men after winning freedom for their injured relative, Iftikhar Ahmad.

"Thanks God that I have come out alive from captivity," remarked Qari Qasim Farooq after reaching Pakistan. "We never imagined that we would be freed. All of us were mentally prepared to die," he added. The 53-year old Hafiz from a Rahimyar Khan religious school said, he was captured along with four other Pakistanis

when the Taliban military transport plane flying them from Herat to Kandahar was hijacked by a Masood soldier and flown to Baghram airbase.

"A few days later, the Taliban captured Kabul and Masood's forces retreated to Panjsher. We too were taken to Panjsher and for the next one year and 15 days were detained at various places in the valley. Our elder colleague, Mubarik Ali Shah, died during captivity and the remaining four suffered from diseases due to inhuman conditions," he recalled.

Qari Qasim Farooq said, all five of them were accused of being Pakistani soldiers sent to Afghanistan to assist the Taliban. "They kept saying I was a general of the Pakistan Army. They spied on me and threatened to torture me if I didn't confess that I was a general. Finally, after much interrogation and debate, they concluded that I was a Qari rather than a general. Thereafter, their attitude changed and I was treated well," he said.

According to Qari Qasim Farooq, there were about 80 Pakistanis still in Masood's captivity, including two of his colleagues Iqbal and Ghulam Rasul, who were not freed because their relatives had not gone to Panjsher to offer guarantees. He said that Masood has offered to release the remaining Pakistanis provided their relatives visit Panjsher and give sureties that they would not fight in Afghanistan again.

It may be added that most of the Pakistanis were caught fighting alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan's ongoing civil war. A few hundred Pakistanis are believed to be in the custody of Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Malik and Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat chief Karim Khalili. The Pakistan government has refused to acknowledge the presence of Pakistani nationals in prisons, maintained by anti-Taliban forces, and has thus not made any formal request for their release.

Taliban plan to set up website

Bureau Report
News 971027

PESHAWAR: Both the Taliban and the ousted Rabbani government are planning to establish website to provide information to Internet users and promote their respective causes.

The Taliban officials have lately been making inquiries in Pakistan how best to establish a computer site and the cost involved in such an operation. They want to link up this site with Kabul where the Islamic government of the Taliban is located. The Taliban information ministry would update this web site regularly.

Ismail Khan: from governor to prisoner

News 971005

From Rahimullah Yusufzai

Taliban official argued that he was fettered to prevent his escape. "We have become extra-cautious after losing the plane and the Russian crew in our custody in bizarre circumstances last year," he said. Ismail Khan appeared visibly healthy though his beard had greyed beyond his years. "I haven't been tortured and the treatment meted out to me by my Taliban brothers is in accordance with Islamic teachings. But I am still a prisoner and you know how prisoners suffer," he explained.

In presence of two Taliban officials, Ismail Khan wasn't expected to say much against his captors. But he gave hints of his displeasure by declining to eat the grapes brought by the Taliban and recalled how well he treated his Taliban prisoners as governor of Herat. "You know Mulla Yar Mohammad, who later replaced me as chief. Ismail Khan was Allah's will that he was now a prisoner after having held important offices during the Afghan 'Jehad' and after the installation of the Islamic government in Kabul in April 1992.

In his first encounter with a journalist since his capture in May this year, Ismail Khan was brought to a room in the "Istakhbarat" (Afghan intelligence service) prison in letters. A

Heraf's governor, was once my prisoner. I treated him well as both of us were former mujahideen commanders. I even had him flown home to Dilaram in my helicopter after his release," he reminded. He also kept saying that power is something temporary, as if referring to his Taliban captors that you too would become powerless like him one day.

Ismail Khan complained that he had no access to radio and newspapers or to pen and paper to write his memoirs. "With my rich experience as an Afghan Army officer, mujahideen commander and governor, I feel I have a lot of stories to tell," he said. He added that he was once visited by members of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) but was still waiting for a reply to his letter sent through them to his family in Mashhad in Iran.

No deal yet on gas pipeline, Taliban claim

KABUL (AFP) — A senior Taliban official Sunday said no deal had been finalised with any foreign company for a pipeline which takes Turkmenistan's gas to Pakistan through war-torn Afghanistan.

The Taliban official said a team with representatives from each of the three countries, would be set up to finalize the deal. "We have not reached any agreement with any company yet. I said that a tripartite team will be set up to talk about this," said Mulla Amir Khan Muttaqi, Taliban's spokesman and minister of information and culture.

The announcement came just one day after Turkmenistan signed an agreement with CENTGAS, a consortium of eight companies, for a project set to cost around two billion dollars.

Muttaqi confirmed that Turkmenistan had signed the deal with a consortium which will comprise American UNOCAL, Turkmenistan government, Delta of Saudi Arabia, Itochu of Japan, Gazprom of Russia, INPEX of Japan, Hyundai of South Korea and Crescent of Pakistan.

Taliban-UN row unresolved

News 971010

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: The dispute between the United Nations and the Taliban administration in Afghanistan following the expulsion of three UN staff members from Kandahar in the last week of September is yet to be resolved.

The three UN staffers were ordered to leave Kandahar after being accused of offending religious and cultural sensitivities of the Taliban and Afghan Muslims. They were charged with staging a walkout from a meeting on September 23-24 in Kandahar in which Taliban officials had agreed to listen to a young female international lawyer from Finland provided she was seated behind a screen. The three UN men had staged the walkout to protest the discrimination against women by the Taliban.

In a recent interview with The News in Kandahar, the Taliban provincial Governor, Mulla Mohammad Hasan Rahmani, defended his decision to expel the UN staffers by arguing that they insulted the religious feelings of the Afghans and tried to disrupt the peaceful meeting in which a comprehensive discussion on the status of repatriating Afghan refugees took place.

"I called them to my office and found out that they had no convincing answer to my queries. All they said was that they were defending the rights of the female guest participant in the meeting. But I told them that she neither asked for this right nor staged walkout. In fact, we are grateful to her for respecting our religious rights and attending the meeting while seated behind a screen," he explained.

When reminded of the UN com-

plaint that the expulsion order wasn't transmitted through the official channels of the Taliban movement's foreign ministry but was rather handed over by the Governor of Kandahar, Mulla Rahmani said he ordered the expulsions because he was presiding over the meeting in which the said incident occurred and was thus required to maintain decorum of the meeting.

Secondly, he argued that the incident took place in Kandahar where he was responsible for ensuring respect for Afghanistan's sovereignty, religion and culture. He also disputed the idea that UN premises in Afghanistan or other host countries were extra-territorial and could thus be used to violate local laws and religious and cultural ethos.

The Governor of Kandahar, who uses an artificial leg after losing his right leg during the Afghan "jehad," said all Taliban officials invited to the UN meeting first met among themselves to evolve a strategy in view of the presence of the young European female in the UN-convened session. "We decided that she can talk to us from behind a curtain and this decision was duly conveyed to the UN staff. I don't know why the issue was agitated after it was settled," he informed.

He said subsequently the UN sent a delegation to Kandahar on September 28 to discuss the incident. There is no change in the situation as a result of that visit. We cannot accept someone who makes fun of our religion and we cannot take back such officials of an international organisation. In future, the UN and other agencies be asked to present the names of their officers being posted in Afghanistan. We have the right to scrutinise the names and approve all such postings," he explained.

The UN had expressed concern over the incident and pledged to maintain the principle of gender equality despite the expulsions. It said the UN principle that all men and women are equal was infringed upon in Kandahar. It claimed the UNHCR legal officer, who happened to be the lady from Finland, agreed to speak from behind a screen in order to guarantee that her message on amnesty law and its implications was heard. It added that she did so under protest and made a statement to this effect at this meeting.

The expulsions have created worries among Kandahar's expatriate staff and some of them feel they would be the next to be ordered to leave. But the Taliban don't appear to be bothered much as to the fallout of such acts. In fact, the Taliban rank and file draw satisfaction from the fact that they were even able to stop European Union commissioner Emma Bonino and the media team accompanying her from violating Afghanistan's laws on taking picture of living creatures in Kabul recently.

It is interesting to note that Finland's ambassador to Pakistan travelled to Kandahar after the incident involving the lady from his country and met a number of Taliban officials. Mulla Nazar Mohammad, the deputy head of the education department in Kandahar, told The News that the ambassador evinced keen interest in the boys and girls schools functioning in Afghanistan and promised to secure some Finnish help for the education sector. He said the Finnish lady whose presence in the Kandahar meeting caused the row between the Taliban and the UN also paid a visit to some of the girls schools in Kandahar.

Afghans try to come to terms with Taliban regime

6.8.97(01)

KABUL (AFP) — One year after the Islamic Taliban marched in triumph into Kabul, the inhabitants of this battered Afghan capital are still trying to come to terms with the fundamentalist regime.

For 17 years Kabul has had to adapt to a succession of rulers — pro-communist, Red Army, mujahedeen and now the hard-line Islamic Taliban.

The changes have all left their marks, scarring the city indelibly.

Each transition brought suffering to the capital from rockets, jet bombers, mortars and death.

Today Kabul looks like a post-apocalyptic nightmare, particularly at dusk when the setting sun catches the dust in the air making passers-by seem almost invisible.

Along a twisting road leading to the top of a strategic pock-marked hill, 38 trees have survived. With white paint along the base of their trunks they look like a row of gallows.

From the top of this hill, and the other four which dominate the landscape, rival mujahedeen groups fought each other for control, seemingly minutes after they had united to chase out the former Soviet Red Army.

As a result shops, houses and rows of concrete flats built by the Soviet occupiers during their 10-year regime, have been reduced to rubble.

Even the few walls that remain standing are pockmarked with shell holes.

In the centre of Kabul, there is not one metre (yard) of wall which does not have its share of

bullet holes.

In Ariana square the red and white police box where one year ago the Taliban unceremoniously hanged former pro-Soviet leader Najibullah still bears his blood stains.

Further along at a travelling market, women dressed in the now compulsory burqa, covering them from head to toe, buy vegetables.

Women rarely venture out, their new Islamic masters would rather they were also not seen at all.

In the hospitals, ministries and schools no women are present, the Taliban will not countenance that.

The one place they could go to wash under a single tap, the hammam, is now off limits.

They are also refused normal

hospital care as the Taliban have enforced a decree that they should be totally separated from men. The only place which will receive the women is so poorly equipped that the Red Cross will no longer support it.

At strategic points around the city Taliban guards lounge in chairs with their Kalashnikov rifles dangling between their legs.

They are polite enough, but it doesn't do to break any of the strict Islamic rules.

The head of the passport office, recognisable by his white turban as opposed to the black worn by other Taliban, is also sitting outside, the better to scrutinize the small crowd of people queuing to obtain a permit to leave the territory.

He alone will decide who gets to leave this Islamic paradise.

Life in Kabul

971014 News

Rahimullah Yusufzai

Kabul was bound to suffer as the capital of a country that has been ravaged by war for almost two decades. Warlords wanting to rule Afghanistan have always eyed Kabul as their ~~main target, thereby~~ ^{main target} inflicting much damage on the fabled Central Asian city which Mughal emperor Zahiruddin Babar chose as his last resting place.

It is not the first time—and it won't be the last either—that Kabul has suffered at the hands of people anxious to resolve their disputes with the force of the gun. The five hills which dominate Kabul's landscape have changed hands many times and on each occasion the death toll in battles for control of the city has probably been bigger than before because of the use of deadlier weapons. In fact, the city was safer to undergo all these sufferings the day Timur Shah, son of modern Afghanistan's founder Ahmad Shah Abdali, decided to shift the capital from Kandahar to Kabul.

Surprisingly, Kabul remained relatively safe and suffered less physical damage as long as the Afghan communists were in power. It was almost in perfect shape when Dr Najibullah, the last communist president ~~who was hanged~~ in the city's Ariana Square on the night of September 27, 1996 by the victorious Taliban and whose blood stains are still visible on the traffic police post there, voluntarily stepped down in April 1992 as part of a UN-sponsored peace plan. But the mujahideen who were supposed to bring peace, stability and Shariah to their homeland, soon turned Kabul into a battleground and killed more people and wrought greater destruction than the city had suffered in the 14-year communist rule. Burhanuddin Rabbani, Ahmad Shah Masood, Prof Sayyaf, late Abdul Ali Mazari, Gen Rasheed Dostum and above all, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, all contributed their bit to turn Kabul into a rubble and inflict unimaginable sufferings on its hapless citizens. Subsequently, the Taliban too showered the city with rockets and bombs, killing more civilians than soldiers.

Besides the physical damage which Kabul suffered, its inhabitants have been subjected to laws that changed with the arrival of every new ruler. The peaceful and uneventful days under Zahir Shah's monarchy gave way to president Sardar Daoud's republican idealism in 1973, only to be followed by a communist ideology alien to most Afghans in April 1978. The next 14 years were spent in a deadly war in which the Soviet Red Army tried and failed to put down the West, Arab and Pakistan-backed rebellion by Afghan mu-

jahideen fighting for their homeland and Islam. The installation of the Islamic government of the mujahideen in Kabul in early 1992 brought an end to music concerts and wearing of skirts by women. For a while, Kabul's cinemas stopped showing films and female announcers disappeared from television screens. Some of these restrictions were later relaxed, but Kabul was no more the liberal and fun-giving city that it had been in the past.

However, even the Kabulis may not have anticipated the profound change that their city has undergone under the Taliban. Most Kabulis listen to the Taliban-run Radio Shariat—not because they like the Taliban self-praise and propaganda which is religiously broadcast every morning and evening, but to find out if any new edict and rule affecting their lives is being enacted. Broadcasting in Pashto and Dari, the radio has no female announcers and music, and the religious programmes aired day in and day out have become repetitive and uninspiring. Still, the radio has not abandoned its widely-listened morning programme that announces deaths and funeral timings.

Most people in Kabul know Mulla Qalamuddin, head of the 'Amar Bil Maruf wa Nahar Anil Munkar' (Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice) department which enforces the Taliban's religious edicts. Few people have seen him but his name is on everyone's lips because his men are empowered to arrest any male found shaving or trimming his beard and any woman who is not properly veiled. According to the Taliban information minister Mulla Amir Khan Mutaqqi, those violating the law on beards are detained for a day or two and freed after being lectured by religious scholars on the merits of wearing a proper beard. Mulla Qalamuddin's department has only three pick-ups at its disposal, which aren't enough to patrol the city and enforce the law, and that could be the reason he is now getting help from justice minister Mulla Nooruddin Turabi's men. According to Taliban officials, Turabi hates people without beards and is blunt enough to tell them on their face that they resemble women. Some people think Mulla Qalamuddin isn't pleased with interference in his work by Turabi's justice department but he and others cannot protest owing to the esteem in which a senior religious scholar like Turabi is held in the Taliban Islamic movement.

Such is the fear generated by Turabi's men that people in Kabul now avoid the road on which his justice ministry is located. Armed with rubber-hoses, which have replaced the more painful iron rods now banned by Taliban supreme leader

Mulla Mohammad Omar, Turabi's and Qalamuddin's men sometimes beat up males who aren't sporting the proper-sized beard. Flying white flags on their fast-driving vehicles, they are a dreaded lot on the battered streets of Kabul. It is now almost impossible to find anyone with a shaved face in Kabul, and the rare sight of such a person is sure to raise eyebrows. Upon enquiry, such unbearded people turn out to be either diplomats or journalists and, in some bizarre cases, unsuspecting tourists. Turabi's and Qalamuddin's men are now mostly required to apprehend males with trimmed beards and very long hair, and women who aren't properly covered or are travelling in a vehicle with strangers. They also see to it that windows and doors of houses are properly covered to ensure privacy, young men don't climb rooftops and peep into others' homes while flying pigeons and kites, and the faithful close their business and stop working at the time of prayers.

A sea of black turbans is visible at Kabul's three mosques—Pule Kheshti, Wazir Akbar Khan and Haji Yaqoob—as the Taliban converge there for Friday prayers. The black turban is a Taliban trademark, as are their kohl-filled eyes and long beards; one can see them lounging outside offices, seated in the sturdy four-wheel drive vehicles or manning checkposts. They are polite and nice, sometime seeking forgiveness after stopping vehicles for a search. In one such instance, young gun-toting Talib at a checkpoint told foreigners travelling in an ICRC vehicle that they had become stricter searching NGO cars after a recent incident in which an NGO vehicle was found carrying heroin powder.

Kabul's expatriate community largely concedes that the Taliban have brought peace and tranquility to the once lawless city. But they are critical and sarcastic while describing the Taliban rules banning women from working outside home and closing down girls schools. They are also perturbed by reports about beating of men and women found violating Taliban edicts. It is common to see some expatriates making fun of the Taliban orders and in the privacy of their homes and clubs they drink to their heart's content and dance away the night as if reacting to the harsh life in Kabul under the Taliban.

On the other hand, most Taliban draw pleasure from the fact that they have forced even Westerners to cover their heads and abandon their skirts. It is not uncommon to see Taliban smiling at the sight of fully covered Western women and former Afghan communists wearing beards. For them, it is a symbol of the triumph of their cause.

Taliban retreat from another key position

News 27/02
From Behrouz Khan

PESHAWAR: Amidst Taliban retreat from the Hairatan intersection and Tashkarghan area near Mazar-i-Sharif, battle fronts in the north of Kabul have also become active following the break of negotiation between leaders of the students militia and the opposition.

General Humayun Faizi, spokesman for the Defence Council of Afghanistan, claimed in interview with BBC that their forces evicted Taliban from Tashkarghan in Samangan province after the control over Hairatan intersection Friday night. Taliban sources conceding retreat from Hairatan intersection, however, denied its forces lost control over Tashkarghan.

The opposition alliance comprises both factions of Junbish-i-Milli Afghanistan led by Gen. Rashid Dostum and Gen. Abdul Malik, Jamiat-i-Islami of former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani and the shia factions of Hezb-i-Wahdat and Harkat-i-Islami Afghanistan. This is the second time during the last four months that Taliban forces reached close to the opposition stronghold but were pushed back from Mazar-i-Sharif.

Taliban forces have retreated to

provinces which are still under the control of commanders loyal to the students militia.

Taliban information minister and spokesman Mullah Amir Khan Mutaqi said the other day that the opposition forces were assembling in Almud Shah Masood held Takhar province and was building pressure on Kunduz province bordering Tajikistan.

On the other front north of Kabul Taliban claimed to have advanced and brought several villages under their control pushing Masood's forces further north of the capital. Fronts in the north of Kabul remained inactive for the last one month due to negotiation between Taliban and two top opposition leaders Prof Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf and his ally Ahmad Shah Massood to broker a ceasefire agreement. The opposition camp criticised Massood and others for lack of cooperation following the dramatic advance of Taliban on Mazar-i-Sharif.

Head of the ruling council in Kabul, Mullah Rabbani in his recent interview with an Arab journalist had confirmed meeting between Taliban representative and Sayyaf and Massood. Mullah Rabbani said that Sayyaf would be welcomed after he surrenders to Taliban and work for the establishment of an Islamic government in Afghanistan.

Kabul's children suffering massive war-trauma: UN

EP 1771008

battered the city until they finally took over one year ago.

According to the UNICEF report, the battles for Kabul have led to a young generation in Kabul suffering collective post-traumatic stress disorder.

Nearly all the children in the

survey said they felt life was not worth living, felt like running away, could hardly cope with life, felt lonely and suffered flashbacks and nightmares brought on by the fighting.

"We are reminded daily of the physical scars of war on children, but the results of this study confront us with the fact that the mental wounds are just as deep," said UNICEF director Carol Bellamy.

UNICEF has begun to train mental health workers and will produce radio broadcasts.

"Creating a safe environment for children to express themselves with a trusted adult is the most important intervention to alleviate the long-term psychosocial effects of war-related violence on children," Gupta said.

But with Afghanistan's 17-year-old civil war still raging and 76 per cent of children saying they trust adults less than ever, aid workers admit the trauma of Kabul's children is far from over.

logical scars.

Two-thirds of children questioned witnessed someone killed by a rocket and scattered corpses or body parts. Half have seen acts of torture and have seen more than one person killed at one time.

More than 70 per cent had lost a family member in the fighting, while 90 per cent believed they would die in the fighting. Seventy-six percent believed they would not reach adulthood.

The findings give the first reflection of the impact of the past four years of intense battles over the capital, which now stands in ruins.

The most intense period of fighting from 1993 to 1995 saw the city frequently pounded by hundreds of rockets and mortars on a daily basis, with street battles gripping southern Kabul.

The bloody bombardment of the city was started by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's, Hezb-i-Islami faction, who following the defeat of the Moscow-backed regime in April 1992, attempted to blast their way into power.

With the government of

President Burhanuddin Rabbani

holding off attacks, Hekmatyar's

rockets were replaced by the

Taliban militia, who themselves

KABUL (AFP) — Years of factional conflict have left Kabul children suffering serious trauma, with three quarters not expecting to reach adulthood, according to a survey released Tuesday.

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) survey said almost all children in the Afghan capital have witnessed extreme violence and did not expect to survive.

"One of the most significant findings of this study is the chronic nature of the trauma being experienced," explained Laila Gupta, the author of the report, the first of its kind carried out in the war stricken city.

The measured trauma inflicted on children from factional fighting for the capital from 1992 to 1996 when the Taliban militia took control. It said virtually all children are suffering long-term psychological damage.

"The impact is not short lived: the violence has been a very influential factor in the emotional development of these children and has dramatically affected their views of themselves and their future," Gupta said.

Based on extensive interviews with more than 300 children aged between eight and 18 years, the study reveals a catalogue of atrocities that have left deep psycho-

Gen Malik flees to Iran as Dostum seizes Shiberghan

News 771021
From Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: The power struggle between the two Uzbek warlords, Gen Abdul Rasheed Dostum and Gen Abdul Malik, took a decisive turn Monday when forces loyal to the former forced the latter to abandon some of his bases in northern Afghanistan and flee to Iran.

Dostum is reported to have re-established his writ in his native Shiberghan, capital of Jauzjan province, hitherto controlled by Malik Sunday evening. Maulvi Abdul Baqi Turkestani, a Junbush-i-Milli Islami Afghanistan representative in Pakistan, claimed Malik escaped to Mashhad in Iran in a plane alongwith his top aides. He said people in Andkhoi town and Saripul province raised flags in support of Gen Dostum Monday, thereby renouncing their loyalty to Malik.

Turkestani said the battle for Shiberghan lasted only half an hour as Malik's soldiers refused to resist when attacked by Dostum loyalists led by Lal Palawani and Jorabeg. The Shiberghan airport, commanded by Malik's brother-in-law, Haji Nooruddin, also fell without much fight. Nooruddin is reported to have fled to Faryab, which is Malik's native province on the border with Turkmenistan and is still held by his younger brother, Gul Mohammad Palawan.

According to Turkestani, he was told by Junbush-i-Milli sources in Shiberghan that Malik was staying in the Huma-i-Awwal hotel in Mashhad. He denied rumours about an attack on Dostum's life and claimed that he was in Hairatan, the river-port located on the Oxus on the border with Uzbekistan, Monday.

Turkestani informed that forces of the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat sided with Dostum in his power struggle with Malik. He said a Hezb-i-Wahdat leader, Hussain Sarwar, was killed by unknown people at the Aqcha intersection Monday.

He said peace and normalcy was returning to Mazar-i-Sharif and rest of northern Afghanistan after the recent wave of lawlessness triggered by the Taliban military advances in the area. He said Dostum as the head of the security commission was trying to disarm the people in Mazar-i-Sharif and expelling all outsiders and armed men from the city. He said these people had been mobilised to fight the Taliban. Rivalry between Dostum and Malik came into the open when the latter revolted against his one-time boss in early May and joined hands with the Taliban to defeat Dostum and force him to flee to Turkey. Malik later turned against the Taliban and inflicted heavy losses on them in Mazar-i-Sharif with the help of Hezb-i-Wahdat. Dostum ended his self-exile in Turkey and returned to northern Afghanistan recently to reach a truce with Malik and together fight the Taliban. With the Taliban threat to Mazar-i-Sharif averted, at least for the time-being, the two Uzbek warlords have now started to settle old scores.

The News International, Wednesday, October 8, 1997

Anti-Taliban forces claim recapture of Hairatan

News 771028
KABUL: Forces battling the Taliban on Tuesday claimed to have recaptured the Afghan border town of Hairatan following an early morning attack.

Speaking from the northern opposition base of Mazar-i-Sharif, the spokesman from the opposition Hezb-i-Wahdat Shiite faction, claimed Taliban fighters had withdrawn from Hairatan, on the border with Uzbekistan. "This morning Hairatan town and surrounding areas were captured in a clean-up operation by our forces," senior Wahdat spokesman Ustad Fazel said.

No independent confirmation of the claim was immediately available, and no Taliban spokesman could be contacted to comment. "We launched our attack from three directions and the enemy fled through the desert leaving behind their heavy weapons and many casualties behind. The enemy has been fully suppressed there," Fazel explained.

Hairatan, a town on the border with Uzbekistan and located on the banks of the Amu Darya, fell to the Taliban nearly three weeks ago. The dusty town is situated 60 kilometers north of Mazar-i-Sharif, the seat

of the anti-Taliban alliance's shadow government which has been under Taliban attack for nearly a month.

Independent sources confirmed Mazar-i-Sharif — which is the only major Afghan city not held by the Taliban — was peaceful during the day, adding frontlines within 35 kilometers east of the city were inactive.

Meanwhile, Uzbekistan on Tuesday proposed a "contact group" including Russia and the United States which could hold talks with Afghan factions on ending the Afghan conflict.

In a speech to the UN General Assembly, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov said that the contact group could include "the countries neighbouring Afghanistan, the USA, Russia and other interested states, as well as the representatives of inter-Afghan forces."

The former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan border Afghanistan, as well as Iran, Pakistan and China. Kamilov also reiterated a call for an arms embargo against Afghanistan, saying that the weapons should be carried out in two stages. — AFP

FP 971020 Taliban relax terms for talks with rivals

KABUL (AFP) — In an apparent first concession to rivals, the Taliban militia expressed willingness Sunday to open talks with the opposition if senior officials of the current Kabul regime held in northern Afghanistan were released.

Taliban officials have to be released by the northern alliance in Mazar-i-Sharif before negotiations get underway, information minister and Taliban spokesman Mulla Amr Khan Muttaqi told AFP.

The fundamentalist Islamic militia had until now been insisting on the release of all its fighters, including commanders and leaders as a precondition for a dialogue with the northern alliance.

The religious militia which controls two-thirds of Afghanistan including Kabul, is locked in fighting against the opposition alliance confined in the northern third of the war-ravaged country.

An estimated 2,000 Taliban were captured by the opposition forces in May when the religious militia briefly entered Mazar-i-Sharif following a coup staged by an Uzbek general Abdul Malik against his boss, warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam.

Malik changed his mind four days later after clashes erupted between the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat and Taliban fighters when the religious militia zealots reportedly started disarming the minority Muslim Shiites in Mazar-i-Sharif, the only major Afghan city not in their hands.

Taliban Foreign Minister Mulla Ghaus, head of the Central Afghan Bank, Ehsanullah Ehsan and Herat governor Mulla Abur Razaq were among the top officials known to be arrested by Malik loyalists.

However, Ghaus who was among the Taliban team who went to Mazar to negotiate with Malik on the city's future set up, managed to escape from his detention, mysteriously, and last month returned to Kunduz province held by pro-Taliban elements.

Stressing the arrested officials were the opposition's "guests", Muttaqi admitted the Taliban had now dropped the demand for the release of all the prisoners of war before opening the dialogue.

"The release of our dignitaries will prove opposition's honesty and sincerity in talks," Muttaqi said, voicing the hope that the Taliban would then start the negotiations which would be fruitful.

However, if the opposition leaders would not release them, it would mean "they are not ready for a settlement," he warned.

Muttaqi's statement follows a previously unannounced visit to Islamabad by the chief of the Taliban government Mulla Mohammad Rabbani for talks with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Friday.

Officials said Rabbani conveyed his side's willingness to hold talks with the opposition alliance.

Dostum made shadow govt's vice president

News 971023
By Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Rasheed Dostum was named as vice-president of the Burhanuddin Rabbani-led Afghan government Wednesday after his first meeting with his rival, Gen Abdul Malik, in five months.

Afghan sources said the two Uzbek warlords met for two hours in northern Afghanistan to resolve disputes. The meeting was made possible due to mediation efforts of leaders of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. Both Dostum and Malik later announced to have overcome differences.

Sources said that Dostum was appointed vice-president of the Rabbani government which is mostly comprised of non-Pashtoon groups led by Dostum and Malik, Ahmad Shah Masood and the two Shiite groups of Karim Khalili and Shaikh Asef Mohseni.

Rabbani and his government were ousted from Kabul Sept 27 last year, by the Taliban and now it controls only about ten northern provinces out of 32 in Afghanistan.

Dostum, who made a dramatic comeback to Mazar-i-Sharif last month from his self-exile in Turkey to lead his demoralised troops against the Taliban, would be responsible for military affairs.

Dostum was toppled by his one-time lieutenant Malik last May and forced to flee to Turkey. Malik later snapped his four-day alliance with the Taliban and turned on them with support from the armed Shiite factions in northern Afghanistan.

A large number of Taliban, many of them unarmed, were killed in Mazar-i-Sharif and taken prisoner, including senior Taliban leaders like Mulla Ihsanullah Ihsan, Mulla Abdur Razzaq, Mulla Mohammad Ghous and Mulla Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor. Ihsan is believed to have been killed in the fighting, Ghous later made good his escape, while the whereabouts of Razzaq and Mansoor are still unknown.

The Afghan sources said Malik would remain head of the Junbush-i-Milli Islami Afghanistan until the party's gathering was held and the views of the people were sought with regard to its leadership. Malik had removed Dostum as head of the party in the May coup d'état. Malik is also the foreign minister of the Rabbani government.

Sources said a big gathering of the anti-Taliban alliance, apparently held in Pule Khumri, welcomed rapprochement between Dostum and Malik and discussed political and military strategies to tackle the Tal-

iban. Top alliance leaders including Prof Rabbani, Masood, Khalili and Mohseni are believed to have attended the crucial meeting.

After having evicted the Taliban from all of northern Afghanistan except Kunduz, Badghis and part of Baghlan provinces, the Northern Alliance apparently decided to coordinate their military efforts to remove from these places, disrupt air supplies from Kabul to Kunduz and prepare a plan to attack Kabul itself.

The truce between Dostum and Malik was reached after clashes between their forces during the last few days in northern Afghanistan. Earlier, there were reports that troops loyal to Dostum had defeated Malik's troops and retaken control of Shiberghan, Andkhoi and Saripul. Malik reportedly fled to Mashhad in Iran in a plane and sought refuge with the Iranian government. It is felt the Iranians played a vital role in ironing out differences between Dostum and Malik and streamlining the affairs of the often fractious Rabbani government.

Nawaz okays wheat accord with Kabul

FP 971022

ISLAMABAD (NNI) — Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has given approval to the proposed agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan for the export of six lakh tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan. Agriculture Minister Abdul Sattar Lalika said here Tuesday.

Officials of the Agriculture Ministry and Taliban officials in Islamabad will ink the agreement, which will be first on the government-to-government basis since the recognition of Taliban administration by Pakistan in May this year.

Lalika hoped that the agreement would help in putting an end to smuggling of wheat flour to the neighbouring country. The government had sealed borders with Afghanistan to check wheat smuggling when severe wheat shortage hit the country in March this year.

Wheat scarcity again hit NWFP and the people linked the wheat crisis with smuggling to Afghanistan.

In order to avoid any further crisis the federal government accepted NWFP administration's request for the supply of extra six lakh tons of wheat to fulfil the requirements of the war-wrecked Afghanistan.

Afghan ambassador Maulvi Shahabuddin Dilawar said that Afghan embassy officials and Pakistani authorities concerned

had completed all paperwork and final agreement was likely to be inked shortly.

He said Afghan embassy had formally sent request to Pakistan's government in response to a letter by the Foreign Ministry. He said that six lakh tons wheat was sufficient for Afghanistan.

Wheat will be provided to Afghanistan at Rs 9 per kilogram and Afghan envoy said there would be no tax and octroi in Pakistan on the allocated quota for Afghanistan. He said the wheat will be sent to Afghanistan via Torkham, (NWFP) and Chaman (Balochistan).

As per decision by both the countries that the agreement will be on government-to-government basis, most of the wheat will be provided to the areas under Taliban's control.

People in eight northern provinces under the control of anti-Taliban alliance is likely to get nothing of the 6 lakh tons of wheat.

The people in these areas are expected to face scarcity of wheat flour shortage in the upcoming winter season. Most of the UN and other international aid agencies, based in Mazar-i-Sharif, have already withdrawn most of their staff and suspended relief operation following ransacking of their offices in the northern city last month.

Dostum consolidates position in newly captured areas

News 971022

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Soldiers loyal to Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Rasheed Dostum were reportedly consolidating their positions in Jauzjan, Balkh and Saripul provinces in northern Afghanistan after overcoming resistance put up by forces commanded by a rival warlord Gen Abdul Malik.

According to Maulvi Abdul Baqi Turkestan, a representative of Junbush-i-Milli Islami Afghanistan in Pakistan, Dostum had reached Pule Khumri in Baghlan province and sent a message to Malik and his brother commander Gul Mohammad Pahlawan that the uprising against them in Jauzjan, Balkh and Saripul wasn't sponsored by him. In the message, he blamed certain local commanders for the revolt on Sunday-Monday which uprooted Malik's forces in these provinces and forced Malik to flee to Mashhad in Iran. He

pledged to maintain cordial ties with Malik and his supporters.

However, Afghan sources said it was part of a strategy by Dostum to regain his control in northern Afghanistan without personally leading his troops in battle against Malik. They said Dostum was behind the move to oust Malik and force him to flee. They felt such an uprising against Malik wasn't possible without Dostum's blessings.

Meanwhile, Malik is said to have conveyed a message to his brother, Gul Mohammad Pahlawan, in their native Faryab province that he would soon return there from Iran.

It may be recalled that Malik had ousted Dostum from power in May last and compelled him to take refuge in Turkey. Dostum returned to Mazar-i-Sharif recently and led his troops against the Taliban in the battle for Mazar-i-Sharif. The Taliban were pushed back to Kunduz, the

only province held by them in northern Afghanistan, and Dostum returned to Mazar-i-Sharif to resume his struggle for power with Malik.

Meanwhile, sporadic clashes have been reported between the Taliban and Malik's forces in the frontline between Badghis and Faryab provinces. The frontlines between the Taliban and the forces loyal to the northern alliance at Kunduz were said to be quiet Tuesday.

Also measures were being undertaken to check lawlessness in Mazar-Sharif by evicting armed groups from the city and beefing up security. The plan, being executed under the leadership of Dostum, has received backing from the two Shiite groups based in Mazar-i-Sharif. Leaders of the Hezb-i-Wahdat and Harkat-i-Islami both said they wanted the armed men to leave Mazar-i-Sharif now that the threat of an attack by the Taliban has been averted.

Detained Taliban leaders inform about whereabouts

News 971024

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Some of the senior Taliban leaders made prisoner by Uzbek warlord Gen Abdul Malik last May announced Thursday that they were very much alive and in custody in Faryab province in northern Afghanistan.

The whereabouts of Taliban leaders Mulla Abdul Razzaq, Mulla Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor, Haji Fazal Mohammad and General Jeelani Khan was not known when Malik's troops turned on the Taliban in Mazar-i-Sharif after their four-day alliance broke down owing to mistrust and outside manipulation. Another Taliban leader, Mulla Ihsanullah Ihsan, also went missing and it is now confirmed that he died in the fighting which ensued in Mazar-i-Sharif.

The Taliban have always demanded release of their leaders by

the anti-Taliban northern alliance so that the necessary goodwill could be created for peace talks between the two sides.

The Taliban plea was that they had gone to Mazar-i-Sharif unarmed for talks with Malik and his allies and arresting them was an uncalled for and provocative act.

Speaking on BBC Pashto service Thursday night, Taliban leader Mulla Abdul Razzaq said he and his colleagues were not maltreated while in the custody of Malik and his brother Gen Gul Mohammad Pahlawan in Maimana, Faryab province and were looked after as guests.

He said nobody from among their relations or Taliban had met them in custody but they were able to speak to Taliban leaders in Kandahar on the phone. He stressed the need for an intra-Afghan dialogue to resolve differences and bring peace and stability in Afghanistan. He said

he was hopeful that the Afghans would be able to peacefully sort out their disputes.

On this occasion, Gen Gul Mohammad Pahlawan said he had not maltreated his detained Taliban prisoners because he believed in the unity of Afghan people irrespective of whether they were Uzbeks, Tajiks or Pashtoons.

He alleged that Gen Abdul Rasheed Dostum still wanted to grab all power and become head of the Junbush-i-Milli Islami party even though his elder brother, Gen Malik, had decided to bury the hatchet and resolve differences with him after their meeting in Pule Khumri. He said in the past as well, Dostum's lust for power shattered the peace and unity of the people in northern Afghanistan. He claimed a few pro-Dostum commanders created problems in Saripul province but these were sorted out later.

UN's Afghan rep resigns

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Norbert Holl, a German national who heads the UN special mission for Afghanistan, has resigned, the United Nations said Thursday.

UN spokesman Fred Eckhard announced at a news briefing that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan "has accepted with regret" Holl's resignation, effective December 31.

He added that Annan's special envoy for the region, Lakhdar Brahimi, would continue in his functions "until further notice."

German diplomats said it was not known why Holl had asked to return to a post with the foreign ministry in Bonn.

But Holl was earlier said to have been upset by Annan's decision to name Brahimi as special envoy for Afghanistan, even though the United Nations stressed that the two positions were complementary.

Afghan assembly supports Zahir Shah's proposals

News 971024
From Rahimullah Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: For the first time, several significant Afghan groups except the Taliban have backed former Afghan King Zahir Shah's plan for settlement of the Afghan problem and invited him to return to Afghanistan and play an effective role in the affairs of his country.

This was one of the major decisions of a meeting of 28 Mujahideen commanders, religious scholars, tribal elders, intellectuals, former ministers and officials of different political parties and armed groups held in Istanbul in Turkey recently. The four-day meeting, which concluded on October 19, was chaired by Abdul Sattar Seerat, a former minister of justice considered very close to the ex-monarch Zahir Shah, who is in self-exile in Italy since 1973.

This was the second gathering of these like-minded Afghans, the earlier two held in Islamabad and Frankfurt. Another meeting would be convened in the next two months at a still undetermined venue and date.

The Reconciliation and National Unity Council of Afghanistan (RNUCA), as the gathering is called, reached agreement on ten points. It resolved that bringing an end to the war and bloodshed in Afghanistan was the national and religious duty of every Afghan and the moral, human and legal responsibility of the international community. It considered outside interference with ulterior motive as one of the main causes of Afghanistan's tragedy and demanded an end to such meddling by all possible means.

The RNUCA stressed that a just, peaceful and representative character would improve further in its next meeting in two months' time.

serious and direct approach of the UN Security Council with regard to finding a speedy and just solution of the Afghan problem."

Those who attended the Istanbul gathering included Syed Kamil and General Pervaiz who represented Junbush-i-Milli Islami of Gen Abdul Rasheed Dostum and Gen Abdul Malik, Mohammad Yunis Qanuni, Dr Abdur Rahman and Fazal Karim Almajq of former president Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami and commander Ahmad Shah Massoud's Shura-i-Nazar, Ghulam Aliqai of the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat led by Karim Khalili, former foreign minister Hidayat Amin Arsala, Ismaili spiritual elder Syed Mansoor Naderi, former Mujahideen commander Abdul Haq, Abdur Raziq, Dr Shafiq Jahan, Badshah Khan Zadran, Anwar Jagdalek, ex-ministers Abdul Ahad Karza, Azizullah Wasefi and Hamed Karza, and other prominent Afghans like Abdul Salam Asem, Asadullah Khan Wafa, Abdul Karim Achakzai, Nasir Ali Meldavi, Abdul Karim Matkoom, and Abdullah Ghankhor.

Five more Afghans who turned up late in Istanbul for the meeting later endorsed its decisions. They were Jeelani Khan from Faryab, Sahib Khan Ashraf, Maulvi Janabi, Mohannad Yousef Pashtoon and Malik Amir Jan, who is an ethnic Baloch. The RNUCA organisers said the participants at the Istanbul meeting came from almost all ethnic, sectarian and linguistic groups and represented different regions and backgrounds.

They thought RNUCA's representative character would improve further in its next meeting in two months' time.

Afghan women health-care risks WHO delegation to 971025 launch probe

GENEVA (AFP) — The World Health Organization will send a team to Afghanistan to check whether women are being refused treatment at hospitals as part of the Taliban's extremist policies, a spokesman said here Friday.

Mission members, who will leave early next month, will include donor country representatives who have "strong opinions on what is happening over there," WHO spokesman Philip Stroot said.

Medicins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders - MSF) has said that Kabul hospitals were turning women away because of severely discriminatory policies imposed by the radical Muslim Taliban movement, which controls Kabul and large swathes of the country.

According to MSF, just one Kabul hospital, with 45 beds, was allowed to treat women, whom the Taliban have forbidden to work outside the home or appear in public except if accompanied by husbands or relatives.

WHO director general Hiroshi Nakajima will decide according to the results of the mission how the organization should provide humanitarian assistance to the country. In seeking to avoid "all discrimination," Stroot said.

Asked whether women's health was being jeopardized by Taliban edicts, Stroot said: "It seems to be the case. But to what degree, that's what we want to determine."

The information received was often contradictory, he added.

MSF has criticized the WHO for cooperating with the Taliban while other UN agencies such as UNICEF have cut ties with the extremists who swept into power in Kabul 15 months ago.

Kabul athletics: Thousands of bearded athletes Friday gathered at the central sports stadium for a belated celebration of the first anniversary of the capture of the Afghan capital by the Taliban Islamic militia.

Around 3,000 Kabul sportsmen wearing long pants performed shows to commemorate September 27, 1996, the day the militia religious militia took

"Owing to economic reasons, the occasion was not celebrated on the due date," said Ehsan Motmaen, secretary general of the Afghan National Olympic Committee (NOC).

After a parade, which was attended local Taliban leaders, the teams competed in wrestling, football and martial arts, the most common sports in Afghanistan. Martial art performers smashed dozens of pottery pieces with professional kicks to the chants of "Allah-o-Akbar" (God is Great) by spectators.

The Taliban, who ousted the relatively liberal government of ex-president Burhanuddin Rabbani last year, have imposed an Islamic code for sportsmen and onlookers.

Athletes have to grow full beards and wear long pants whereas spectators have to shout "Allah-o-Akbar" instead of clapping and cheering.

The games are interrupted at prayer time while both the players and the spectators perform worship in a congregation before resuming matches.

Eighteen years of war in Afghanistan has drastically hit traditional and contemporary sports, with most of the athletes and coaches either killed or forced to flee the country.

It is a matter of pride that under Afghan sportsmen are still struggling to keep their traditions alive despite the fighting in their homeland," official commentator at the games said.

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Drug Control Programme on Friday announced that the Taliban government in Afghanistan had agreed to ban poppy cultivation to curb the opium trade.

The announcement was made here by Pino Aricchi, executive director of the Vienna-based agency. — AFP

Dostum releases 120 Taliban prisoners

News 971026

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Uzbek warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum has released 120 Taliban taken prisoner in northern Afghanistan last May.

Maulvi Abdul Baqi Turkestan, the representative of Junbush-i-Milli Islami Afghanistan in Pakistan, told The News that Dostum ordered the release of these prisoners from jails in Shiberghan, capital of his native Jauzjan province. He said most of these prisoners were very young.

He said Dostum also wanted to free more Taliban but the military commanders holding them said they would use them in exchange for their people held prisoner by the Taliban. He said Dostum later said

he was ready to discuss exchange of prisoners with the Taliban.

Dostum had reached Shiberghan for the first time after fleeing to Turkey in May when a fellow Uzbek general, Abdul Malik, ousted him from power and forced him to escape from Afghanistan. He returned to Mazar-i-Sharif last month to lead his troops in battle against the Taliban.

Meanwhile, bad weather prevented NWFP chief secretary Rustam Shah Mohmand from flying to Mazar-i-Sharif Saturday to resume Pakistan's mediation in a bid to bring the warring Afghan groups to the negotiations table.

A special plane had reached Peshawar Saturday morning to fly Mohmand to Mazar-i-Sharif for talks

with former Afghan president Prof Burhanuddin Rabbani. But it was learnt the pilot expressed his inability to fly to northern Afghanistan in these conditions. As the weather forecast for today (Sunday) is also not good so the plane can now undertake its journey only on Monday.

Mohmand was asked to undertake the journey to Mazar-i-Sharif in a bid to revive Pakistan's stalled peace mission in Afghanistan. The mission, led by additional foreign secretary Iftekhar Murshed and Pakistan's ambassador to Kabul, Aziz Khan, suspended its activities in late August after several visits to Afghanistan failed to bridge the differences between the Taliban and their opponents.

